

## **Editorial Board:**

The Revd Keith G Jones  
Dr Cheryl A Brown  
The Revd Dr René Erwich  
The Revd Dr Parush R Parushev  
The Revd Dr Peter F Penner  
The Revd Dr Ian M Randall  
Mgr Petra Živnůstková

**Issued three times a year**

## **Subscriptions:**

\$10 per year within Europe and the Middle East  
\$15 per year to the USA  
Individual copies \$6

Enquiries regarding subscriptions to [Denise@ibts.cz](mailto:Denise@ibts.cz)

Enquiries regarding articles to [Journal@ibts.cz](mailto:Journal@ibts.cz)

ISSN 1213 – 1520  
Registration Number: MK ČR E 10511

**International Baptist Theological Seminary**  
of the European Baptist Federation, o.p.s.  
Nad Habrovkou 3, Jenerálka, Praha 6, CZ 164 00  
Czech Republic

IČO: 25741683

*Produced by the IBTS Journal Team*

## **DIRECTORS' CONFERENCES 2002**

Each year IBTS offers a series of conferences on important themes at the heart of contemporary church life and mission, designed to bring people together from many countries within the European Baptist Federation. Baptist seminaries and Unions principally, but not exclusively, within the European Baptist Federation are asked to draw these conferences to the attention of their people. Scholarship help is available to those wishing to attend from countries and Baptist communities not able to meet the costs.

**24 – 28 January**

### **Facing the mission challenges today**

Dr René Erwich and Dr Peter F Penner will direct a conference continuing our series looking at the mission challenge in contemporary Europe. How are we to engage with society and bring alive the historic Christian faith in a truly contextual way?

**24 – 30 June**

### **The Practice of Christian Ministry in the Postmodern world**

Dr Parush R Parushev will co-ordinate a team exploring issues of ministry and the application of theology to the life of the church. This is a vital conference for those serving in the churches and exploring questions of relevance and authenticity.

**25 July – 1 August**

### **Praha 2002**

The Rector, working with a team of specialist Youth Leaders offers the fourth year of this major Baptist youth event, built around a daily cycle of study, social action and late night contemporary worship. This important event for young people from throughout Europe has proved to be a life-changing force.

**2 – 8 August**

### **Baptists and Orthodoxy**

Dr Ian M Randall and Dr Parush R Parushev offer this conference to help Baptists understand the history and nature of the Eastern Orthodox tradition and to explore the relationship between Baptists and the Orthodox Churches as experienced throughout Europe today.

*For more information keep watching the IBTS web site or email [White@ibts.cz](mailto:White@ibts.cz)*

## CONTENTS

<b>EDITORIAL</b>	4
 <b>THE NEW TESTAMENT SCRIBE IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW</b> The Revd Dr Peter F Penner	5 - 19
 <b>POSTMODERN TRENDS IN COMMUNICATING CHRISTIANITY</b> The Revd Dr Mirosław Patalon	20 - 32
 <b>THEOLOGY IN THE SERVICE OF THE CHURCH</b> The Revd Dr Nigel G Wright	33 - 38
 <b>THE ROLE OF <i>TOTUUDEN KAIKU</i> IN DEFINING THE IDENTITY OF THE FINNISH-SPEAKING BAPTISTS</b> Anneli Lohikko	39 - 50
 <b>BOOK REVIEW AND NOTICES</b>	51-52

## EDITORIAL

With this issue, the *Journal of European Baptist Studies* enters its second year. It is one thing to launch a new journal; it is another to build up the kind of support that indicates it has a place in the well-populated world of academic journals. From the response we have received, we believe the decision to launch a journal giving a European Baptist perspective on theological and historical affairs has proved to be the right one. At the same time, these are early days and we hope we can extend our base of support. We are keen to have subscriptions from more libraries, as well as from individuals, and some of our readers may be able to help by drawing the journal to the attention of seminary and other libraries.

In this issue we are continuing our policy of offering a mixture of articles: biblical, theological, contemporary and historical. The article by Dr Peter Penner draws from material he delivered in a lecture at IBTS. It is a fine study of the subject of the 'scribe' in Matthew, and relates this to theological work today. We are pleased to welcome our first contributor from Poland. Dr Mirosław Patalon has had an interest in communication in the postmodern context. He completed his PhD two years ago and is now a part-time research assistant at IBTS, continuing his studies for his habilitation in the Polish academic context. He has written a provocative article reflecting on his own missiological experience in Poland.

Many conferences take place at IBTS and it is our intention to use this journal to publish papers or summaries of papers. The European Baptist Theological Teachers' Conference, which meets every two years, was held at IBTS from 19 to 24 June 2001. The 64 participants represented 14 countries and at least 24 different seminaries in western, central and eastern Europe, and the Middle East. The conference theme was 'Doing Theology in the New Europe' and there were papers, seminar responses and workshops in subject areas. The papers all sought to present, from different perspectives, the way in which theological study is being done in Europe. Dr Nigel Wright from Spurgeon's College, London, and Dr Parush Parushev and Dr Peter Penner from IBTS, offered important insights into doing theology in relation to culture, church life and the academy. An exploration of ecumenical theology was given by Dr Ivana Dolejšová, a lecturer at the Protestant Faculty, Charles University, Prague. A summary of Nigel Wright's paper is reproduced here.

Finally, the journal is intended to offer an opportunity to those who have not published any scholarly work before. Anneli Lohikko's article on an aspect of Finnish-speaking Baptist identity is an admirable example of this in the historical field.

**The Revd Dr Ian M Randall**, Academic Dean, IBTS

# THE NEW TESTAMENT SCRIBE IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

## 1. Introduction

There is a continuing discussion among Christians about the role and task of a Christian theologian and the integration of the theologising and teaching ministry into the overall mission of the Church. It is important that this debate should be decisively influenced neither by current circumstances nor by problems observed in churches, though one certainly needs to consider contemporary misappropriations of these ministries. For Baptists it is the New Testament and its ecclesiology which provide the foundation and standards for church life and the definition of beliefs.

The New Testament scribe (γραμματεὺς), who in this paper is considered as the prototype of a Christian theologian and teacher, was an important figure in the time of Jesus and also belongs to Christ's ongoing community, the church, in the same way as scribes belonged to the Israelite community. The theologian or scholar/teacher fulfils a controversial ministry in the church. Some fear the dangers – present not only with the scribes in Jesus' time – that the scholar/teacher will overload the people with regulations and lead them astray from the Kingdom of God,<sup>1</sup> or that scholars will even place themselves in the way of the Kingdom of God so that no one can enter. Others, honouring the scholars in their church, listen with blissful adoration to their wise words.

In contrast to the approach of both these groups, I will argue that God appoints 'New Testament scribes' for ministry in his church and that this should be a ministry that is received with discernment. In the gospel of Matthew the term for the scribe in the church is the same as that used for scribes during Jesus' earthly ministry who then stood mainly in opposition to Christ. The true task of the scribe, which is apostolic and prophetic, is described for us primarily in the gospel of Matthew, probably because Matthew had a special interest in this group. For him the scribes presented a certain continuum between the New and the Old Testaments in the debates of those times between the Jewish and Christian communities (Bosch 1992:59-60).

<sup>1</sup> Compare Schniewind (1968:229): 'The term "kingdom of God" has here the same meaning as always. It is the future world of God, and the entrance to it is disclosed by the Word. This word has been entrusted to Pharisees [who often were scribes]. But they did not unlock the kingdom of God, instead they rather locked it denying themselves and those entrusted to them the entrance.' (Here and later quotes from German language works by Luz, Grundmann, Jeremias, Lohmeyer, Röhser, Riesner, Schniewind, Strack & Billerbeck and Zimmermann are translated by the author of this paper)

There are many texts in the New Testament which need to be analysed in order to provide a broad biblical base for the topic discussed. Again and again this has been done in recent discussions about the educator, mentor and facilitator (words used instead of the New Testament terms ‘teacher’ and ‘scribe’) during the last 30-50 years. Although it would certainly be interesting and enriching to analyse all of the texts, it makes more sense to limit this article to only a few texts from one gospel, the gospel of Matthew. Especially Mt. 13:52 and parts of Mt. 23:8-12, 34-36 will be the points of interest here and will provide some information about the tasks and the position of a New Testament scribe.

## 2. The New Testament scribe and his mission

In the discussion of ‘Old and New’, Matthew is distinctive among the gospel writers in that he does not just chop off the past and start with something absolutely new.<sup>2</sup> Within his gospel he attempts to show the importance of the continuation of the old while also showing that the old is connected to the new. For this important activity, the connecting of the new kingdom of God announced by John the Baptist and Christ with the old, Matthew underlines that the scribe or the teacher of the law is needed (Morris 1992:362-363). The task of a New Testament scribe or teacher is highlighted by Matthew in what appears to be one of Jesus’ parables of the Kingdom of God. The teacher of the Law who becomes a disciple in the Kingdom of heaven is to be like the owner of a house who takes new and old things out of his storeroom (Mt. 13:52). This comes at the conclusion of the parables in Matthew chapter 13.

The Kingdom of God or Kingdom of heaven parables of Matthew chapter 13 (the sower, the weeds, the mustard seed, the yeast, the hidden treasure, the pearl and the net) gradually disclose the announced Kingdom of God. However, the New that is coming with the revealed Messiah must not, in Matthew’s account, remain unrelated to the Old. For this reason, there is not simply a concluding remark at the end of Jesus’ parables about the Kingdom, as in Mark and Luke,<sup>3</sup> but there is an affirmation of the

<sup>2</sup> It is generally noted among commentators that Matthew is more interested in the Old Testament than the other gospel writers, that he specifically emphasises the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies, that there are close analogies between Moses and the way Matthew presents Jesus. See, for example, France 1989:166-171 and others.

<sup>3</sup> The ending that Matthew gives to this set of parables has no parallels in other Gospels. Mark, who has only three kingdom parables in Mark chapter 4 (the sower, growing seed and mustard seed) and a briefer explanation of the purpose of parables, concludes with the general affirmation that Jesus explained everything to the disciples in private. Luke, who puts the parable of the sower in chapter 8 and the parable of the mustard seed and the dough in chapter 13, has the discourse interrupted by the visit of Jesus’ family. Concluding this episode Jesus again, as already in v. 18 (be careful how you listen [to the parables]), emphasises the need to listen and to do God’s word (v. 21).

continuity between the Old and the New, and the explanation of this continuity is central to the job description of the scribe.<sup>4</sup>

The phrase ‘Because of this’ (Διὰ τοῦτο), which is the phrase that we find at the beginning of Mt. 13:52 (Because of this, every scribe who becomes a disciple...), should, therefore, as also in Mt. 6:25 and 18:23, not be understood as causative,<sup>5</sup> but as affirmative (confirming what has been said before) or even as continuing the previous thought: ‘And thus it happens that every scribe...’. However, this section, with its picture of the scribe as the householder, does not simply fit in with the other Kingdom parables that have gone before. It has a different focus. Nor, although it comes at the end of the parables, is it a pointed summary of them. It does not offer a simple summarising answer. Whether this parable is derived from a different tradition or whether it has rabbinic backgrounds, as some propose, is difficult to prove.<sup>6</sup> Luz states:

The image [used in this parable] itself presents no evidence of it [of a rabbinic background]. But it is clear for every Jewish scribe that his task is to open up the treasures of wisdom, to preserve and hand down the old wisdom of the fathers and to pour out new wisdom himself, or to hand down the Torah from Sinai and adjust it for one’s new situation. In this parable the point of comparison is becoming evident only from the background information! Has then a Jewish saying about a scribe later been changed into a parable? If one considers the language, Matthew could be responsible for that (Luz 1990:362).

Luz also argues that the use of the word scribe here carries an open, non-technical meaning. It can describe someone who is knowledgeable of the Scriptures (Luz:363). The Hebrew equivalent *sopher* or *sophrim* is –

- (a) someone who writes, for example, a clerk of the court, Sanh 4,3; 5,5; a clerk writing civil law documents, BM 5,11; divorce letters, Gittin 7,2; 8,8; 9,8; Torah scrolls, Tefillin a. Mezuzot, see tract Soferim;
- (b) a learned person in general; and as the interest of Jewish learning circled almost exclusively around the Scriptures and the law, the Soferim called especially the scribes γραμματεῖς, those

<sup>4</sup> Still, it is not easily apparent why Matthew includes at the conclusion of the parabolic description of the Kingdom of God a parable about a scribe. ‘For the formal reason, that this way the text would better fit for an ending of the parable chapter? Or for hermeneutic reasons, because a parable, rather than a saying, needs an interpretation or decoding and forces the reader to consider what is (or could be) meant by ‘old’ and ‘new’? Or was the image formerly more clear and elaborate?’ (Luz 1990:362-363).

<sup>5</sup> However, this is how most of the commentators understand it. Compare, for example, Gundry (1994:281): ‘Because the true disciples have understood the parables, they will be the kind of scribe portrayed in the following part of the statement.’ But had Jesus’ disciples really fully understood all that Jesus had explained to them? The rest of the gospel and some of their actions and words prove their limited understanding.

<sup>6</sup> Compare Davies (1991:444) who describes speculations of various commentators about possible statements or proverbs on which Matthew (or Jesus) could have based this saying.

knowledgeable of the law νομικοι - lawyers, the teachers of the law νομοδιδασκαλοι (Strack & Billerbeck 1986:v.1,79).

This terminology, however, was present in the rabbinic usage ‘only for the description of the older (pre-Christian) generations of the scribes, ... while the later (post-Christian) scribes almost generally’ were called *chakamim*.<sup>7</sup> The later self-identification of Rabbis, therefore, is also not *sopher* or *sophrim*, but *chakam* (Luz 1990:363).

Following this more traditional usage, a scribe was, in the neutral sense, a scholar and also, for example in Acts 19:35, a high official or town clerk. But usually in the New Testament the word is used to describe a religious scholar – a theologian. The group of scribes is usually listed in the New Testament with other groups to be found in Judaism, primarily along with the Pharisees. In the gospel of Matthew this happens no less than seven times. However, the scribes do not automatically belong to the Pharisees. Their place is among the elders of Israel. They are included in the Sanhedrin or with the High Priests (Morris 1992:111).

But how, if at all, was this role of scribe to be carried into the New Testament church? Grundmann states: ‘As the old community of Israel had those who are knowledgeable in the Scriptures, so the new church is also given its scholars who have received training’ (Grundmann 1986:357). This statement is, I suggest, supported by Mt. 23:34 where Christ himself speaks of a commission for the scribes, seeing them as people that he will send, and linking them with prophets and wise men. Whether the Matthean church already had such scribes at the time when Matthew was writing is difficult to say.<sup>8</sup> The text in Mt. 13:52 does not help in answering this question since it does not tell us who those scribes were that had become disciples of the kingdom (Carson 1984:331-332; comp. also Jeremias 1956:181).

When Jesus, however, speaks in Mt. Chapter 13 of a scribe who becomes a disciple of the kingdom of God (or is disciplined), he is certainly speaking in terms which were familiar to his hearers. To be a disciple or learner was a distinguishing mark of the traditional Jewish scribe of the time of Matthew.<sup>9</sup> To ‘make disciples’ or be ‘discipled’ (μαθητευθείς) is the

<sup>7</sup> Compare Strack & Billerbeck (1986:v.1,79-80): ‘Only rarely is [*sopher* or *sophrim*] used in relation to later scholars, and where it is supposedly found in post-Christian Jewish literature in this meaning it usually depicts a teacher of youth, a Bible teacher as opposed to a Mishna teacher, or also someone who knows the table prayer as opposed to an ordinary person who does not know this rite. – The explanation for the name *chakamim* given by the talmudists has only haggadic value.’

<sup>8</sup> Many commentators, however, assume that it is ‘likely enough’ (France 1989:112). See also Gundry 1994:458: all ‘disciples as scribes’; and Davies 1991:445: ‘...Christian scribes... were no doubt prominent leaders of Matthew’s church’.

<sup>9</sup> Compare Tasker (1973:140): ‘In the somewhat difficult saying of Jesus with which Matthew brings the present collection of parables to a close, the word *scribe* would seem not to have its usual meaning of a



root meaning of Mt. 13:52. The word is a participle and is used transitively here, similar to ‘make disciples’ in Mt. 28:19, or possibly as an intransitive deponent, as in ‘become a disciple’ in Mt. 27:57. From the context of both references it seems justified to translate the word as ‘make disciples’ or ‘become a disciple’ rather than with the theoretically possible narrower meaning of ‘teaching’ or ‘instructing’. The intransitive basic meaning of μαθητεύω is to ‘be a disciple’.

The phrase ‘become a disciple for the kingdom of heaven’ (μαθητευθεὶς τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν) provides a more detailed definition of the New Testament scribe. ‘Kingdom of heaven’ (βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν) means here the same as ‘kingdom of God’ (βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ).<sup>10</sup> The dative βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν can be a dative of relation, which most commentaries prefer, or a *dativus commodi* (‘has become a disciple for the kingdom’); it could also be used in the sense of a *dativus instrumentalis*.<sup>11</sup> An unequivocal decision about this is probably not possible (Luz 1990:363). As the Mt. 13:52 parable apparently deals with a ‘Christian scribe’ who is possibly also a direct disciple of Jesus, Matthew could well have thought of himself as describing such a person, especially if scribe is understood as a non-technical term and means merely someone who is able to read and write (Tasker 1973:140).

But the point is not to create an individual self-portrait such as, for example, the middle age artists did when portraying themselves in biblical scenes; the generalizing *πας* speaks clearly against it. It is also clear that the expression is not used to describe all those who have been instructed by Jesus, as one could expect from the context, but only those knowledgeable in the Scriptures among them. All those instructed by Jesus have the task to proclaim (Mt. 28:19f.). The experts of Scripture have yet a special task (Luz 1990:364).

This task is defined in the second part of the statement in Mt. 13:52 where the scribe is compared with the ‘householder’ (οἰκοδεσπότης). This noun appears in the New Testament twelve times, mainly in the gospel of

---

Pharisaic teacher of the law: for that would make the saying somewhat irrelevant to the context. The reference would appear to be to the disciples of Jesus who have learned the truths of the kingdom of heaven (the *these things* of verse 51) about which Jesus has been giving instruction.’

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, also Goppelt (1981:44) about this issue: ‘In Matthew – and only in Matthew, and in the Judeo-Christian Gospel of the Nazarenes – one frequently encounters speech about ‘the kingdom of the heavens’. The parallel tradition demonstrates that the expression was substantially identical to the ‘kingdom of God’. Their synonymous character was anchored in Palestinian idiom. People were reluctant to pronounce the holy name of God and therefore circumscribed it. ‘Heaven’ is one of the customary circumscriptions. This is the function of the term as it is also found in the Gospels (e.g., Mk. 8:11 and Lk. 15:18). ‘The kingdom of the heavens’ – the plural form reproduces literally the customary Hebrew plural *schamayim* – meant, accordingly, the kingdom of the One who is in heaven, not a kingdom that is in heaven or comes from heaven.’

<sup>11</sup> Various manuscripts add either ἐν (D, 579,700, *pc*) or εἰς (L, Γ, 892, *pm*, g) before τῇ βασιλείᾳ so as to explain and clarify the meaning of the phrase and indicate the kind of dative intended. However, they can be considered later additions.

Matthew. Οἰκοδεσπότης is someone who is in charge of a 'household' (οἶκος) in its widest sense. Matthew often uses it in parables together with the term 'man' (ἄνθρωπος).<sup>12</sup> Οἰκοδεσπότης encompasses the same meaning as the Hebrew *baal hawait* and describes a house and/or land owner in the wider sense (compare Bauer 1979:558).

The New Testament scribe owns some property, and his property is defined as a 'treasury' (θησαυρός) which contains New and Old. Carson assumes that θησαυρός generally means 'a man's 'heart', its wealth and cherished values... that we must understand the disciplined scribe to be bringing things out of his heart – out of his understanding, personality, and very being' (1984:332). It seems to me that Jesus rather speaks about the knowledge which the scribe has acquired or collected.<sup>13</sup> In any case this 'treasury' must probably be understood as a storage room,<sup>14</sup> because it is used in relation to a house.

That which is found in the treasury is defined as 'things new and old' (καινὰ καὶ παλαιά), terms which have caused much speculation. Already the Jewish scribes knew this phrase and understood behind it the explanation and exegesis of ancient texts (Strack & Billerbeck 1986:Bd.1, 677). Many church fathers understood by new and old the New and Old Testaments (see for example, Irenaeus, Haer. 4,9,1).<sup>15</sup> Whether, though, Matthew actually could have meant by old the then known Hebrew Bible and by new the revelation and message of Jesus, or whether he saw in the New the fulfilment of the Old, that is of the promise, seems questionable.

More decisive, and for Matthew's theology typical, is the connection or interrelationship of Old and New.<sup>16</sup> For Jesus had not come to replace

<sup>12</sup> See Mt. 10:25; 13:27,52; 20:1,11; 21:33; 24:43.

<sup>13</sup> The 'treasure' has been mentioned in v. 44. There it may have meant something very valuable, outweighing any earthly possession and worth giving everything to obtain. The meaning in v. 52 is somewhat different as it is strange to think of anyone bringing forth something new from a chest buried for some time deep in a field.

<sup>14</sup> Bauer (1979:361) provides the following two main translation versions: 1. The place where something is kept, treasure box or chest, or, 2. Storehouse, storeroom. The term is also known as 'that which is stored up, treasure... of the treasures in heaven... deposited there and available to men after death.' Fig. 'of the heart as the treasury for heavenly possessions'. In the end Christ is the one 'in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge lie hidden', Col. 2:3.

<sup>15</sup> Or see, for example, Gregory: 'Otherwise; The things old are, that the human race for its sin should suffer in eternal punishment; the things new, that they should be converted and live in the kingdom. First, He brought forward a comparison of the kingdom to a treasure found and a pearl of price; and after that, narrated the punishment of hell in the burning of the wicked, and then concluded with 'Therefore every Scribe, etc.' as if He had said, He is a learned preacher in the Church who knows to bring forth things new concerning the sweetness of the kingdom, and to speak things old concerning the tenor of punishment; that at least punishment may deter those whom rewards do not excite' (cited from Catena Aurea 2001).

<sup>16</sup> Günter Röhser (1995:32) writes: 'Certain consequences from what has been said follow also for the definition of the relationship between the 'old; and the (developing) 'new Testament': According to the approach taken, the 'New' does not replace the 'Old' (comp. for this 'new and old' in Mt. 13:52 as well as the juxtaposition of the transfigured Jesus, Moses and Elijah in 17:2-4), but rather – probably

the Old with the New (Mt. 5:7) and to do away with the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil these. There is, as we have seen, a continuity between old and new. Jesus does not simply exegete the Torah and the Prophets in a new and different way, but continues with his message in such a way that he 'proclaims the will of his father. In contrast to rabbinic Scripture interpretation this means at least one new accent, without consciously revoking the continuity to the Jewish scribe' (Luz 1990:365).

However, there is a differentiation between the Old and the New, and the New receives priority over the Old. The task of the New Testament scribes in their teaching is, therefore, as Matthew sees it, to develop the New as well as the Old and to find ways of linkage between them. Concerning the history of salvation this relationship could look like the following:

If the word order is significant, the new matters more than the old and Jesus is saying that the new teachings his followers are embracing do not do away with the old teachings (those in the Old Testament), but are the key to understanding them. The new age has dawned, and it is only in recognition of that fact that the old can be understood in its essential function of preparing the way for the new (Morris 1992:363).

### **3. The position of the New Testament scribe in the Church**

Chapter 23 of the gospel of Matthew is usually known as the 'Seven Woes to the scribes and Pharisees'.<sup>17</sup> As nowhere else in the New Testament, Matthew describes Jesus as seeming to enter a very controversial and harsh debate with the Pharisees and scribes. This sharpness is not found in the other Synoptics. Mark and Luke certainly do not spare these groups (comp. Mk. 12:38-40 and Lk. 20:45-47), but their comments can be compared with the previous chapter in Matthew rather than with chapter 23. The seven woes to the scribes and Pharisees contain all the seriousness of God's judgment and are spoken by the Messiah himself.

But if these words are addressed only to the scribes and Pharisees of those days it is strange that at the point at which Jesus gives such a condemnatory speech Matthew does not even mention the scribes and Pharisees among the listeners. Jesus' words are directed to 'the crowds and to his disciples' (23:1). The fact that this speech is not portrayed in other

---

comparable to the way of the Aramaic Targumim – is a new interpretation and, on this basis – a complementation and critique (in order to improve the Old and to 'perfect' it...).

<sup>17</sup> This is what the NIV suggests for a heading of the chapter. The Orthodox Study Bible has 'Abuses of Authority'. Grundmann (1986:481) gives the whole chapter the heading 'Separation of church from Pharisees and their scribes' and overwrites the first 12 verses with 'Limits of the scribes' authority and the order in Jesus' church'.

gospels with this degree of harshness, or is even missing, shows the special interest which Matthew had in the topic of scribes (Luz 1990:363-366). In particular he wished to highlight the role of the true scribe.

Against the dark background of judgment in Mt. Chapter 23, Matthew paints a picture of the New Testament scribe who must have a different position in the community of the church than the one occupied by the Jewish scribes (Mt. 23:8-12). This scribe, for example, should not take the names 'teacher', 'father' or 'instructor'. This scribe is also one whom God has called as his 'sent one' (ἀπόστολος), and the scribe is grouped together with others commissioned for service, especially the 'prophets and wise men' (προφήτας καὶ σοφοὺς) (23:34). This special position is one of humble service (Mt. 23: 8-12). Riesner observes:

Mt 23:8-12 stands in an antipharisaic context although the words are directed toward supporters. 23:8 is only loosely connected to 23:8-12 through the key term ῥαββί. Both of these facts speak against the version that the Evangelist may have created 23:8ff. himself. Vv. 23:8-10 are coherent due to the key word καλεῖν and could have been, therefore, handed down together already in oral transmission. In the context of the judgment speech of Mt 23 vv. 8-12 present the second of five subunits. The Evangelist loves pairs of three in such passages and one of these can be observed here (Riesner 1981:260).

The parallel structure<sup>18</sup> of vv. 8-10 in which the Gospel of Matthew defines the position of the true New Testament scribe – mainly by contrasting the true scribe with the Pharisees and their deeds – is very informative. It is remarkable that the positions and hence the titles of the 'Rabbi' (ῥαββί) or 'teacher' (διδάσκαλος), 'father' (πατήρ) and 'instructor' (καθηγητής) are reserved only for God or, rather, for the Trinity.<sup>19</sup> To relate

<sup>18</sup> 'It has already been observed that the way Matthew uses 23:8 and 23:9f. as small construction units already points to the independence of both pieces. Actually they have a varying poetic structure which has been underlined through the text arrangement above: 23:8 is a three line verse; the first two lines create some kind of antithetic parallelism while the third presents the climax. 23:9f, however, is a four-line verse. Line one and two as well as line three and four create, similarly, as the beginning of 23:8, an antithetic parallelism. Both pairs of parallelism together create some kind of a synthetic parallelism. If one assumes that 23:9 and 23:10 have always stood together and presented an independent, from 23:8, expression then without further explanation it is becoming apparent why 23:10 has been preserved although just by itself it does not add something essential beyond what 23:8 has already said' (Riesner 1981:261). It is clear from the following comparison:

ὁμεῖς δὲ μὴ κληθῆτε <b>ῥαββί</b>	Καὶ <b>πατέρα</b> μὴ καλέσητε ὑμῶν	Μηδὲ κληθῆτε
εἰς γὰρ ἐστὶν ὑμῶν ὁ	Ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς,	<b>καθηγηταί</b> , ὅτι
διδάσκαλος,	εἰς γὰρ ἐστὶν ὑμῶν	καθηγητὴς ὑμῶν ἐστὶν
πάντες δὲ ὑμεῖς ἀδελφοί ἐστε	ὁ <b>πατήρ</b> ὁ οὐράνιος	εἰς ὁ <b>Χριστός</b>

<sup>19</sup> 'The form of the saying seems related to well-known forms in the Old Testament as also to the later New Testament 'God is one' and seems to follow the Shema' (Lohmeyer 1967:339). It is worth the discussion whether this passage has a reference, similar to Paul's 1 Cor. 12: 4-6, to all three persons of the Godhead or whether διδάσκαλος in the Gospel of Matthew is used for the Holy Spirit.

these titles of honour to oneself as a human being is considered a misappropriation of that which belongs to God only.

The honorary title *rabbi* comes from the Hebrew and can be translated as ‘my Lord’ or ‘my teacher’. ‘Rav with the meaning ‘teacher’ appears already in the mouth of Jehoschua b. Perachja who lived around 110 BC: Get you a teacher *rav* and find for yourself a study colleague *chaver*... Toward the end of the first century AD *ravi* had become the title for the Palestinian teacher of law while the personal suffix had lost its initial meaning’ (Strack & Billerbeck 1986:Bd.1,916-917). During the time of Jesus this title was not yet used as a technical term for scribes. Dalman points out, for example, that during the time of Jesus *ravi* was ‘the older Jewish description of the Jewish head recognised by the Roman government’ (in Strack & Billerbeck 1986:Bd.1,917). In the New Testament *rabbi* is used as an honorary address in the sense of ‘my lord’, ‘my master’ or also ‘my teacher’ (:917). Still, it seems that already at that time Jewish Pharisees and scribes used the title for themselves as an honorary title and Matthew makes clear that Jesus, for this reason, rejects this custom in the Christian church and for its scribes.<sup>20</sup>

Verse 9 holds a number of problems, specifically in applying the term *πάτήρ* to the scribes. According to commentators, this usage cannot be confirmed for scribes of the time and it is not used in the New Testament as a title (Morris 1992:577). Furthermore, it seems that the term was perceived as a ‘title of honour for rabbis and great ones of the past’ (Tasker 1973:220). However, Grundmann comments that:

Father is a widely known expression in Israel with its pronounced Father-devoutness (comp. Sir. 34, the praise of the fathers); it has also become a term for rabbis, as follows from the Mishna tractat Pirque Aboth and the way rabbis were called, even if it is difficult to prove its use in form of an address (Grundmann 1986:486).

There is a discussion of whether the term here may describe biological fathers. This, however, seems unlikely if one considers the context of the

<sup>20</sup> Lohmeyer (1967:339) seems to confirm this: ‘The name ‘rabbi’, as is known, did not describe a certain profession during Jesus’ times, but, in general, was used to describe honour, as did, in an even more pronounced way, the word ‘mari’ (κύριε). Both relate to each other similar as the English ‘sir’ and ‘lord’... What is prohibited here is that disciples would allow themselves to be given honorary titles which would distinguish them from all others; for ‘you are all brothers’, all are of the same rank and value.’ From here Lohmeyer attempts to draw a parallel to the expression ‘one is good’ in order to show from the context that it means the same as ‘one is great for you’, that is, God. For Riesner (1981:268) the assumption is questionable that ‘rabbi’ has only later become a title of office. ‘Such scholars as Hillel, Jochanan b. Zakkai... or Nachum from Gimzo who lived and worked around 90 AD... are addressed in the rabbinic literature with ‘rabbi’ although their names were not preceded by the title ‘rabbi’... Already before ‘rabbi’ had become a fixed, so called official title, scholars were addressed this way by their students in order to show their respect for them.’



gospel of Matthew and Jesus' appeal for loyalty and honour towards parents (15:4; 19:19). The saying about the Father in heaven as the only legitimate Father expects one to rethink Christian family, a biological family that, as a nucleus of the church, subordinates its relationships to the brother and sister relationships in the church.<sup>21</sup>

There is, of course, a sense in which a Christian may be spoken of as 'father' to other believers (or for them to be called his children, e.g., 1 Cor. 4:15; 1 Tim. 1:2), but in the New Testament the term is not used as a title, nor is it to be employed in any spirit of superiority. We are all brothers and sisters and belong to one family with one Father, the *heavenly* Father. The adjective enables us to grasp something of his surpassing excellence and to recognise that Jesus is not speaking of some light and unimportant person. There is some emphasis on *your*; whatever be the case with others, the followers of Jesus are such that they recognise that they have but one Father (Morris 1992:577).

Verse 10 introduces another term which is often seen as equivalent to or as 'another review of v. 8' (Dalman in Strack & Billerbeck 1986:v.1,917).<sup>22</sup> 'Due to Lightfoot (on 23,7) it has become customary to perceive *moreh* as the rabbinic equivalent of 'instructor' (καθηγητής). But where the current Talmud text has the address *mori*, one should read *mari* 'my lord'' (Strack & Billerbeck 1986:Bd.1,919). In fact, the word has been used in the New Testament only in this place and it seems, therefore, as the other terms, to point to another honorary title in the sense of *moreh*.

However, καθηγητής introduces a new important nuance which includes more than just the meaning of ῥαββι and διδάσκαλος. This term, which became more popular during the later hellenistic period, is broader

<sup>21</sup> Only those who do the will of God belong to the new, true family of the kingdom of God and Jesus calls his disciples to this kind of family through his own example (Mt. 12:48-50). The head of this family is God himself; the realisation and acceptance of his Fatherhood leads to an understanding of oneself as brother or sister in relation to others (Comp. Jean Carmignac 1978:140). The title 'father' for God is used in the Synoptic Gospels mainly, as also seen in the 'our Father' prayer, in the context of a group (with some exceptions in Mt. 6:4,6,18), which could prompt the assumption that the New Testament Father-God, as also in the Old Testament, is perceived to be the Father of a people and less so a father of an individual Christian (Cf. Gnllka 1986:217).

It is interesting to note that when Jesus promises his disciples a hundred-fold reward for their leaving everything and everyone behind in order to follow him, he lists all left persons and objects as those whom the disciples will receive back again, except the fathers, although they have also been left behind for Jesus' sake (comp. Mk. 10:29,30). Only God takes this position in the family of the kingdom of God.

<sup>22</sup> Alfred F. Zimmermann (1988:164) attempts to prove the opposite: 'In fact, v. 8a and v. 10a seem to correspond very nicely formally:

v. 8a ὑμεῖς δὲ μὴ κληθῆτε ῥαββί ...

v. 10a. μὴδὲ κληθῆτε καθηγηταί ...

But v. 9a fits the pattern vv. 8a.9a.10a only partially.' However, Zimmermann then says: 'If, then, it can be taken for certain that the church rule of Mt. 23,8-10 after Easter addresses itself against the upcoming 'Christian rabbinate' the question remains as to the exact time of its development' (Zimmerman:185). It needs to be asked, though, whether this rule, which must have appeared before Paul, expresses instead the general caution of first century's Christianity against scribes, without actually denying the ministry of teaching of a brother among brothers. The Church in the twenty first century is usually less cautious against Christian teachers and their ministry, unfortunately.

than the term διδάσκαλος with its more technical meaning. It introduces the dimension of an inner moulding, or better, conscience and character formation, of the student (Riesner 1981:263). In this task the true scribe follows Christ. As Carson puts it:

Jesus returns to that theme in v. 10, completing an A-B-A chiasm. Thus v. 10 largely repeats v.8, using a different word for 'Teacher'...but it is not repetitious, still less anticlimactic, because it ends by identifying the sole Teacher as the Christ, the Messiah. This not only picks up the theme of 1:1 and 16:16 but echoes the confrontation in 22:41-46 regarding Messiah. Jesus' enemies, the certified teachers of Israel, could not answer basic biblical questions about the Messiah. Now he, Jesus the Messiah, declares in the wake of that travesty that he himself is the only one qualified to sit in Moses' seat - to succeed him as authoritative Teacher of God's will and mind (Carson 1984:475).

While the Triune God reserves the final teaching seat, the New Testament scribe is a brother among brothers (v. 8). That the main point in the passage is to level out positions and change values, so that hierarchical thinking has no space anymore, is confirmed by vs. 11 and 12. This is the position of the New Testament scribe: 'the greatest among you will be your servant' (ὁ δὲ μείζων ὑμῶν ἔσται ὑμῶν διάκονος). In fact, the original role of the Jewish scribe, too, was the same. He was not only called to study the Scriptures, but also to explain them to the people so that every believer would know how to live as part of the people of God. Verse 3 indicates Jesus' quite positive evaluation of these contemporary interpreters and their interpretation ('you must obey them and do everything they tell you'). The main point of criticism of the scribes is the missing example of implementation of taught truth in their lives – which do not show God's righteousness, but rather a search for self-exaltation. By contrast, someone who is interpreting the Scriptures should show a full understanding of the responsibility inherent in it and should back up their teaching with their living (v. 13). When they, in their confrontation with Jesus, reject the Messiah and despise his announcement of the coming kingdom of God, they lead those astray who fully trust them (Morris 1992:578-579).

Jesus attempts to prevent the scribes within his community from falling into the same danger of an irresponsible authoritative Scripture interpretation when he describes them as set in the position of servants and not lords. This is underlined in Mt. 23:12 through a negative and a positive statement. The New Testament scribe is able to fulfil his calling only when he walks the way of lowliness and points to God's glory. It will not be easy for him to maintain this attitude because his ministry will very soon grant him glory and honour, and he will be offered gratitude and even adoration by his listeners. This may well cause him to forget that he is a servant.

Developing further the perspective that arises from the things said above, the scribes of the church community as envisaged by Matthew are those who serve God and others. Vv. 34-36 underline this again; here the function of the scribe is primarily of someone standing in the hearing of God, interpreting God's word without compromise and without consideration of the differing opinions of listeners. The scholar has been sent by God in a similar way to the prophets – a *missio dei* for Israel in an Old Testament way gives way to a new mission. As with the prophets, this will be a costly ministry. The prophets, wise men and teachers will be persecuted and killed.

As already mentioned, the New Testament γραμματεὺς is 'sent out' ἀποστέλλω together with the 'prophets' (προφήτας) and 'wise men' (σοφούς).

*Therefore* seems to mean something like 'because this is the way it happened again and again,' 'because God's sending of his prophets and the like has never been welcomed.' That God has sent his messengers is a truth that is plain throughout the Old Testament (cf. 2 Sam. 12,1; for the repetition, Jer. 7:25-26; 25:4). The emphatic *I* here seems to mean God the Father; there is a sense in which Jesus sends out his messengers (the mere word 'apostle' means 'messenger'), and grammatically he could be saying that he himself is sending people (Morris 1992:588).

The mission of the New Testament scribe is the same as of the prophets and the wise men. According to Mt. 13:52, the scribe has the same message as the prophets of the Old and New Testaments. While the task of an Old Testament messenger, a prophet, was to apply the Torah to the changed context of the addressed people, the task of the New Testament scribe is to 'unfold the obvious in a new way and the new in a readily comprehensible way.'<sup>23</sup> This means: detect the new in the old and relate the new to the familiar' (Luz 1990:366). For this reason, the scribe is a missionary, 'a commissioned one' (ἀπόστολος) and his task consists of a prophetic teaching mission.

#### 4. Relevance of the New Testament scribe's position

In conclusion the results of the study may be summarised as follows. The position of a New Testament scribe is, according to Mt. 23, two-fold. On the one hand, within the church he or she is a servant and minister, and it is emphasised that neither these terms nor other expressions naming positions are titles of honour. Scribes, or scholars/teachers, do not fill positions of special honour in the church. They are on the same level as others in the

<sup>23</sup> Luz uses a word play in the German original: "Selbstverständliches neu und Neues verständlich zu entfalten".



community. On the other hand, they are sent ones, missionaries with a message from God. Mt. 13:52 describes the task of a scribe. The focus here is on the scribes as those called to remain in the balance of the new and the old. The traditional corresponds to the Old, which refers at least in part to the Old Testament, while μαθήτης points to the New, Jesus' good news about the kingdom of God. The call of Jesus to the life of the Kingdom is a call to be a disciple (the embracing of the New) and yet at the same time there is to be continuity with the Old (and hence there is a task for the scribe). Indeed the New Testament scribe must unite both of these callings (disciple and scribe) in his or her person if the task is to be fully fulfilled. In this balance of new and old the 'scribe who has become a disciple for the kingdom of heaven' (γραμματεὺς μαθητευθεὶς τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν) introduces the word of God to the listeners and opens for them the way to the kingdom of God (cf. ch. 23:13,34-36).

At the beginning of the third millennium, as at the beginning of the first, Christ's Church is confronted with the necessity for, as well as the problems of, this ministerial position. In Mt. 23 Jesus speaks out against what we may call pre-modern conceptions of teaching, which exist even today. He confronts concepts that bind knowledge to persons and to places where these persons teach, such as for example 'I studied at the feet of Gamaliel', 'While doing my doctorate I studied theology for several semesters at Tübingen, Leuven and Cambridge', or 'I have heard lectures by such and such a professor and I cite them in my paper'. Knowledge is considered a possession which bestows knowledgeable persons glory and power. It seems that these honoured people have a halo around their heads. And because we have been in touch with these people or have studied in places of theological research some glory from their halo has come upon us; our knowledge has become of greater value because of the people we have learned it from.

In our global, or should I say digital, postmodern world we may have come closer to the ideal of Jesus and are able more deeply to appreciate some of Jesus' words.<sup>24</sup> Information which needs to get to the people is not stored in smart brains or in theological strongholds – everything is available to everyone and this process seems not to be able to be stopped. In spite of problems inherent in these new developments, theological education now has even better opportunities to fulfil Jesus' words: Freely you have received, freely give (Mt. 10:8).

---

<sup>24</sup> This is not meant to gloss over the negative and problem-ridden sides of postmodernism such as the concept of absence of meaning and truth. But sometimes it is good to underline some of the positive current developments where postmodernism has pointed out the shortcomings of the scientific method.

The task of a contemporary teacher is not primarily to present all knowledge to the learner, but to encourage study and stimulate research, to guide and to offer frames of reference leading from the old and known to the new, as indicated in Mt. 13:52. In this way a teacher can be a servant, someone who does not present oneself as the authority in the subject, because authority lies only with the Triune God who offers to free us from the dangers of authority and power. The teacher is a servant in that he or she has access to information and has the ability, not only to know and organise, but also to synthesise, to evaluate, to critique and apply so that understanding can occur on various levels of learning in the church.

The ministry of a New Testament scribe is a prophetic ministry for the church community. A scribe as prophet will need to understand what is going on in the global village and be able to interpret it for the global as well as for the local church and to say it in such a way that it is understood. This task makes the scribe an ambassador who is sent by Christ and who ministers in the church and in the world as a servant of God.

## Bibliography

Bauer, Walter. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1979)

Bosch, D.J. *Transforming Mission - Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1992)

Catena Aurea, Patristic Commentary by St Thomas Aquinas.  
<http://www.ccel.org/a/aquinas/catena/Matthew/ch13.htm>. Site Visit 15 January 2001.

Carmignac, J. The Spiritual Wealth of the Lord's Prayer, in *The Lord's Prayer and Jewish Liturgy*, hg. von J.J. Petuchowski & M. Brocke. (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978)

Carson, D.A. Matthew in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, hg. von F.E. Gählelein. Bd. 8. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984)

Davies, W.D. The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, in *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, Vol. 2. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991)

France, R.T. *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989)

Gnilka, J. *Das Matthäus-Evangelium*. 1. Teil. Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament. Bd. 1. (Freiburg: Herder, 1986)

Goppelt, L. *Theology of the New Testament*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981-2. 2 vols)

Grundmann, W. *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*. Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament. Bd. 1. (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1986)

Gundry, Robert H. *Matthew: A Commentary on his Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994)

Jeremias, J. *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*. 4. neu bearb. Aufl. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956)

Lohmeyer, E. *Das Evangelium des Matthäus. Nachgelassene Ausarbeitungen und Entwürfe zur Übersetzung und Erklärung.* Kritisch-Exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967)

Luz, U. *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus.* Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament. Bd. 1/2 (Mt. 8-17). (Zürich-Neukirchen-Vluyn: Benziger/Neukirchener Verlag, 1990)

Morris, L. *The Gospel According to Matthew.* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992)

Riesner, R. *Jesus als Lehrer.* Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament. 2. Reihe 7. (Tübingen: J.C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1981)

Röhser, G. Jesus - der wahre 'Schriftgelehrte': Ein Beitrag zum Problem der 'Toraverschärfung' in den Antithesen der Bergpredigt. *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 86 (no. 1-2):20-33, 1995.

Schniewind, J. *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus.* Das Neue Testament Deutsch. Bd. 1. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968)

Strack, H.L. & Billerbeck, P. *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch.* 6 Bde. (München: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung. 1986: v.1)

Tasker, R.V.G. *The Gospel According to St. Matthew - An Introduction and Commentary.* Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973)

Zimmermann, A.F. *Die urchristlichen Lehrer.* 2. Aufl. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck). (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament. 2. Reihe, no. 12), 1988)

**The Revd Dr Peter Penner** is Lecturer in Biblical Studies at IBTS. He gained an MDiv in Biblical Studies and Missiology from the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary in Fresno, USA, and an MTh and DTh in Missiology from the University of South Africa. He is chairman of the Eastern European Schools of Theology and vice-chairman of the Euro-Asian Accrediting Association. He was Rector of the St Petersburg Christian University from 1992-1997.

**5 – 6 November 2001**

**Nordenhaug Lectures at IBTS, Prague**

to be given by

***Professor Miroslav Volf***

**The title of the three lectures is**

**Suffering, Memory and Redemption**

If you wish to hear Professor Volf delivering his lectures at IBTS

and want to book accommodation please email [White@ibts.cz](mailto:White@ibts.cz).

## **POSTMODERN TRENDS IN COMMUNICATING CHRISTIANITY**

### **Introduction**

The primary reason for this study could be expressed in the form of a question: How can the truth of the person of Jesus Christ and his teaching be effectively communicated now, at the turn of the century? The question, although posed and answered in various historical contexts, can never be taken as finally resolved. Assuming the fact that interpersonal communication is conditioned by cultures which for their part are ever changing, we are unable to communicate evangelical truths creatively in any other way than through making our communication constantly culturally sensitive. Such a process will always bear elements of risk and uncertainty in deciding on which direction to take. Nevertheless, as Christians we cannot avoid this challenge since we have been called to go and make disciples of all nations.<sup>1</sup>

When we think of the ‘nations’, not only in Western countries but also in Eastern European countries, ministers of all Christian denominations call attention to the effects of secularisation. Many among a younger generation are abandoning inherited Christian beliefs, and at the same time are questioning all kinds of traditional authorities. The truth is, however, that while the institution of the church and institutional religion are in crisis this has not resulted in a turning away from God and spirituality altogether. People still keep seeking for what is authentic, but rather than accepting the answers imposed by institutions of different kinds they prefer searching for themselves. Since faith has become largely a private matter there is little room for ‘the only true’ dogmas. Therefore, without much exaggeration, over-dogmatism and the institutional side of religion can be pointed to as major causes of the crisis in the church. This presents the church with a dilemma: how far should the church adapt its modes of teaching and presentation of the faith?

### **The Church as a School**

We will look first at the church as a teaching agency. A definition of pedagogics is that it is the entire body of theoretical concepts and practical methods concerning conscious and purposeful acts of a person aimed at teaching and moulding another human being. Therefore the Christian

---

<sup>1</sup> See Matt. 28:19

church and each particular member of it are undoubtedly called to be teachers. It is not surprising that prominent and influential educators such as Jan Komenski have been committed Christians.<sup>2</sup> Jesus meant to influence people. Apart from the main purpose of his coming – his atoning death for our sins – he himself was a teacher, directing specific knowledge to his disciples in order to be able to see sound changes in their everyday lives. The last commandment given by Jesus was: ‘Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded to you.’<sup>3</sup> Thus it can be seen, beyond doubt, that the church is a school.<sup>4</sup>

In this study I will examine the influence of postmodern tendencies in culture and relate this to pedagogics. But are terms such as pedagogics and education still relevant? Is not what we are doing just a mere imposition of our own beliefs and culture? Should we join the attack on pedagogics and abandon all educational programmes as restrictive? One of several possible responses seems to be critical pedagogics, with its claims that it offers liberation education – often perceived as ‘a bridge linking the social achievements of post-modernity with pedagogics’.<sup>5</sup> The collapse of communism marked the end of most modern myths about the power of pure Reason – myths present not only in Eastern European countries but in the Western world – and what seems to be a solution worth examining in our attempts to overcome this crisis is the idea of joining postmodern observations with modern educational ideas. Postmodern pedagogics is actually aiming at activity, creativity and a critical approach to all aspects of reality. In this approach a teacher can be effective in leading students towards autonomy and hence enabling them to live in the contemporary world.

Given such an educational perspective, teaching cannot be subject to any ideology because then it could become a tool in the hands of totalitarian attitudes which stand at the other end of the spectrum from the views of postmodern philosophers. For them, variety offers the best foundation for discovering identity, and to place one view higher than another is regarded as politically incorrect. Tolerance and reciprocal respect seem to be omnipresent and unquestionable. Taking the above assumptions into consideration, pedagogics generally has ceased to have any ambition to

---

<sup>2</sup> See J A Komeński, *Pampaedia* (Wrocław, 1973); J A Komeński, *Wielka Dydaktyka*, Zakład imienia Ossolińskich (Wrocław, 1956).

<sup>3</sup> Matt. 28:18-19.

<sup>4</sup> B Powers, *Christian Education Handbook* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1981), p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> T Szkudlarek, *Wiedza i wolność w pedagogice amerykańskiego postmodernizmu* (Kraków: Impuls, 1993), p. 15.

bring students to absolute truth. Both lay and church educators will exclude themselves from having a real influence on people unless they stop bemoaning this situation and instead seek to engage with the culture. In this process of change it is likely that the division between more sophisticated and popular culture will break down. As privileged institutions such as art galleries, museums and theatres give up their leading role in moulding culture, and as pop-culture, for example, is included in school curricula, so Christian educators may have to change their interests. This openness to new ideas may be helpful to the churches. Knowledge and science may no longer be viewed as the complete answer to all human questions; they become rather a launch pad for further investigations and broaden the area of the unknown, pointing to the complexity of reality.<sup>6</sup>

## The Problems

Yet there are also problems for the churches. As a pastor I have often experienced the lack of effectiveness of the traditional forms in which the gospel is communicated during a Sunday service or at home Bible study meetings. This seems to be true elsewhere, and does not apply only to my ministry and church group. It might be because of a widely held belief that Christianity is at an end and the Age of Aquarius is beginning.<sup>7</sup> Both Protestant and Catholic churches are undergoing a deep crisis. My research into culture and religion and their mutual influence, of which the changing stances in religious education are an example, has brought me to a more specific focus. I am seeking to explore links between contemporary methods used in religious education in Western contexts and the trends in the increasingly dominant postmodern culture, and whether a deeper understanding of these trends would result in the more effective development of Christian churches.

Within the Protestant churches in Poland three different approaches to culture can be distinguished. The first approach isolates the church within its own culture. The implication of this is the alienation of a church. Churches like this stigmatise 'the world' and avoid any cultural novelties since these would be signs of an ungodly life. In effect, both the sub-culture of churches like this and their theology continue to stiffen and become more rigid. It is perceived as a sin, for example, when women take initiatives in the life of a local church or when the members sustain relationships with people outside of the group. One of the results is the increasing consolidation of a group identity and it is this which attracts

---

<sup>6</sup> T Szkudlarek, op. cit. p. 111-17.

<sup>7</sup> For an analysis of the church in relation to the New Age religions see John Drane, *What is the New Age saying to the Church?* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1991).

prospective converts. In spite of what is commonly believed, Christian fundamentalism of this type is influential and seems to bring hope to those threatened by the secularisation of everyday life.

A second approach is one of indifference to the world. Disorientation in an ever-changing culture means that such churches are unable to make their stand against the crisis in a church surrounded by a constantly changing cultural context. Groups of such a mindset often decline and their members tend to join groups that are more distinct in their position.

Thirdly, there are those who are open to the world and willing to seek new forms of church existence. These churches have no fear of 'the world' and 'worldly' matters but are challenged by them and see that they must live with other people if they are to obey Jesus' command 'to go to all the nations'. Believers who live out this attitude usually develop broad contacts with other denominations, not in order to accomplish a vision of a single world-wide church but rather to exchange experiences and to enrich and learn one from another. Searching for new 'worldly' methods of contextualisation of the faith puts the whole inner system of beliefs at risk, and co-operation with other Christians helps in the task of seeing what is at the heart of Christian faith. The riskiness of the enterprise is balanced by the hope of finding a contemporary, intelligible language of communication appropriate to the culture of today. In many Christian circles this attitude has been criticised for attempting to blend together the godly with the ungodly, but in spite of this criticism new churches pursuing this model keep emerging.<sup>8</sup>

## Methodology

In order to address this issue of the church and its teaching in relation to contemporary society I undertook some empirical research. The church is a very sensitive field of research, mainly because we have to work with people who consider their faith as the most essential dimension of life. It is very important then to employ a method sensitive to this very delicate area of human existence but on the other hand allow it to be analysed with satisfactory thoroughness. For obvious reasons it is not possible to experiment with the human 'soul' in laboratory conditions. Not all factors defining human attitudes to the supernatural are measurable and susceptible to analysis. That is why in this situation it is much more appropriate to use one of the quality methods which interprets rather than counts the observed facts. I used the so called 'participant observation' method, which belongs

---

<sup>8</sup> Not all of these initiatives are long-lasting. In England there was an interest in 'post-evangelical' thinking in the mid-1990s. This was embodied in the book by Dave Tomlinson, *The Post Evangelical* (London: Triangle, 1995). This phase seems to have passed.

to ethnographic work. Louis Smith, in *The Encyclopaedia of Educational Research*, describes the main points of it in the following way:

- the researcher must be a part of the group for a long time – long enough to become a source of information;
- there must be equal focus on the extraordinary and on every-day facts;
- the way participants view reality is crucial;
- facts must always be interpreted from a wide context and holistically;
- the main objective is not the outcome but the process by which it is reached;
- in the final results of the observation, both theoretical evaluation and practical examples are creatively combined.<sup>9</sup>

My experience of and position in Baptist circles allowed the use of this method of investigation. I have been an active member of Baptist churches since 1983, first in Ostroda, where I was responsible for youth work, and then in Wroclaw, where, after graduation from the theological seminary, I was invited to plant a new church. Since 1996 I have been responsible for planting a new church in Gdansk which I am pastoring now. In my inquiry into the topic of the communication of the faith I was at the same time object and subject. I was involved in seeking to communicate. In the research work I often used the monthly church periodical, *Parakletos*. The language used in the church was also the object of my investigation since I expected it would show much about the community structure. This turned out to be the case.

## New Experiences and Observations

In spring 1989 I was invited by a local Baptist church in Wroclaw to start a mission ministry in a troubled region of the city called ‘the Bermuda triangle’, probably so called originally because of the ‘lost’ or ‘forgotten’ people there. They were forgotten by the city at large. My task was to launch a missionary and educational programme that would be more suitable than the paradigm used up to the time of my arrival, which had proved to be ineffective in having any influence on the local community. In 1990 a new church building was erected in a different part of the town and all the members from the church in the triangle moved there, with the exception of a few who supported my missionary efforts. The district’s rundown buildings, still showing signs of second world war military operations, tragically pictured the spiritual state of the inhabitants. Alcoholism, crime and hostility towards people from other parts of the town were the main features of the place. ‘God forgives, the triangle doesn’t’ was graffitied locally.

---

<sup>9</sup> See J Strzemieczny, ‘Etnograficzne metody badawcze w pedagogice’, *Edukacja*, 1984/1, p. 48.



The former pastor gave me a picture of the local community where children in their early years dreamed of their lives as very different from that of their parents and guardians. Yet just within a couple of years they changed into exact followers of them. By the time they reached the age of sixteen they had already experienced disillusionment in a system of education which gave no answer to their substantial questions. They had started using alcohol and committing their first criminal offences. I was to observe this process myself in the years to come. One fourteen-year-old girl shared her dreams of a normal family and soon became pregnant by a boyfriend one year older than herself. The need to be loved and a lack of an education in elementary birth-control won over common sense.

Very often I felt scared because I was an outsider and that was exactly how I was treated. I was deeply convinced, though, that once I had decided to live within this community to serve them I was not going to give up. In the church magazine, *Parakletos*, I wrote at that time:

Whenever I walk down the streets of 'the Bermuda triangle' I try to recall the images of the region from sixty years before. In my imagination I picture marvellous buildings, masterpieces of art-nouveau, carefully tended gardens and clean playgrounds and finally people relating one to another in a kind and respectful way pursuing with hope and humility their earthly plans.<sup>10</sup>

The reality was tragically incompatible with this vision. After several months I already knew that everybody was wishing to move to 'better' quarters and for the majority of young people a common solution was emigration to the West.

Together with my friend, we started meeting late at night to pray for a revival in this area that I had envisioned as 'a triangle of Jesus Christ', instead of 'the Bermuda triangle', with numerous bible study groups, the place itself to be the cradle of missionaries influencing other parts of Wroclaw, Silesia, Poland and elsewhere. We dreamed that this very area, re-born spiritually, would be flooded by new inhabitants because of its attraction. The change was supposed to be seen in people's eyes and in the surrounding environment, just as in the book of Ezekiel: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.' (Ezekiel 37:5-6). If bones could be animated, so could human hearts. So much depends on our life, ministry and prayer to bring the 'breath of life'. I believe that this is what Jesus challenges us with today.

---

<sup>10</sup> M Patalon, 'Wyzwanie', *Parakletos*, 1/91, p. 3.

During the initial months of my ministry in Wroclaw I approached a representative group of the population inhabiting the area of the triangle with a simple survey in which four questions were asked:

1. What is heaven in your opinion?
2. What is hell?
3. What is salvation?
4. Are you happy?

To be able to hear people's answers was important. In this way I began my empirical research. The questions were meant to give an insight into their knowledge of biblical truths. However, very soon it turned out that terms such as heaven, hell and salvation had become a part of the church's interior language and bore completely different connotations outside of the church. We discovered this inadequacy of our language in the attempts to communicate our message. This contradiction raised very specific and basic questions: Is our group so confined that our language lacks communicative value in environments outside the church?

## **New Forms of Church**

From the very first days of my ministry I was aware that a regular pastoral ministry with formal services and other typical forms of church leadership were not going to be my choice. I wanted to become one of the people I was to serve, to be able to understand them, and meet them not only in the church venue but first and foremost in their natural environment. At the same time we started regular meetings for youth from the neighbourhood in a club called the 'Thought exchange shop'. We were aiming at reaching people through different forms of artistic involvement, for example rock music.

Secondly, we were trying to direct our efforts at involving the triangle youth in organising various social and cultural events. Actually many of them responded positively to our invitation to co-lead the club. We were amazed by the tremendous change in those who previously had been ridiculing our efforts and then were the first ones to guard the events. Many times their understanding of order and peacefulness was different from our expectations but we assumed that we had no other choice but to accept their frequent and random exits and entrances, and their language full of taboo expressions. But in exchange we were rewarded by the fact that the boundaries between our groups were breaking down and that we ourselves were becoming the triangle people in their eyes.

There were some disappointments, too. Our club was robbed several times; sometimes we were close to giving up and moving to a 'better'

quarter. Nevertheless it was obvious that nothing could be achieved by idly waiting for the people to start appearing in the club. We left the chapel so as to earn money to renovate it in the future. What constitutes the church, we believed, is the people, not the building. I keep repeating the pronouns 'we' and 'our' to emphasise the role of other mission leaders involved in that work. One of us was an adjunct professor of Wroclaw University. He became involved in the students' ministry. Another, the father of young children, organised a children's day-care club. I became a teacher in a nearby high school. So finally we were ready to enter the environment of unchurched people in order to be able to influence them through our lifestyle.

Breaking with older church practice, we decided to be open to other denominations and to creative explorations leading to more contemporary ways of expressing our faith. It was clearly emphasised in our monthly magazine that we were not interested in disputing about differences between churches. Encouraged by this positive atmosphere pastors and leaders of Christian groups and churches – Methodist, Pentecostal, Baptist and the Catholic charismatic group 'Hallelujah' – started regular monthly meetings over breakfast. Mutual resentment and distrust were crumbling and instead of that new areas of co-operation started emerging. In 1992 I wrote in *Parakletos*:

The first Christian believers didn't know any cross-denominational hostility. Issues of secondary importance weren't the subject of any discussion: they were of no salvation importance and therefore Christian security and lifestyle didn't depend on them. However severely persecuted, the followers of Jesus of Nazareth grew in number and maturity. There were many converts in spite of the fact that this meant losing social and material position. The love of God was incomparably stronger than anything. So where was the secret? I suppose that we would be able to think of many possible reasons but we can instead merely point to the crucial one – focusing on Jesus. Proclaiming the gospel was based on three truths:

- Jesus is the promised Messiah,
- Jesus has risen,
- Jesus will come soon.

Those were the core of the Christian life. How about us today? We would save a lot of time wasted on idle discussions. Too often people convert from one denomination to another. Too often we are focused more on law and culture, leaving Jesus out. But it's He who calls us to security, happiness, acceptance and inner peace. His love should always motivate us and He will set us on fire for himself as He did with his first disciples.<sup>11</sup>

I was not the only person saying such things. The beginning of my work in Wroclaw was parallel to changes taking place in the Baptist

---

<sup>11</sup> M Patalon, 'Co jest ważne?', *Parakletos*, 9/92, p. 3.

churches in Poland. The younger generation was trying to break ties with some out-of-date Baptist traditions and a culture manifesting itself in particular in outward behaviour, like avoiding alcohol or claiming the superiority of one denomination over another. However, rather than this being a sign of rebellion against an older Baptist generation it was reflecting some weariness with the wider Protestant culture in Poland. We were ready to 'compromise' some of that culture if this provided an openness to new experience. In May 1994 I wrote in *Parakletos*:

We have imported too much of a Western culture together with Protestantism and we confuse it with so called true biblical Christianity. But very often what it is, is nothing else than an American lifestyle and mindset (which may be just perfect but only for the Americans). We are too quick to forget and neglect many catholic forms which don't stand in contradiction with the Bible and what's very important they are much more natural for most of us who come from that culture (the tradition of a Christmas midnight service called 'pasterka' can be one of many examples). I have been recently participating in a catholic fellowship where the Taizé canons were sung and I felt so comfortable in this familiar way of worshipping. Is this a sign of getting old? Or hopefully more mature? I am ready for a change. How about you? Maybe in our Thursday prayer meetings we can start seeking our lost cultural identity in the ways of praising our Lord?<sup>12</sup>

We were, however, far from emphasising one way of worship, whether Catholic or Protestant, one style of behaviour, one way of dressing or one method of studying the Bible. Variety was viewed as a most fascinating thing, especially the variety we were discovering among Christians of different traditions. The small Protestant environment in Wrocław has not had a good testimony of unity, but evangelical groups in Wrocław were ready to start a cross-denominational fellowship. The presence of the Biblical Theological Seminary played an extremely positive role in that process, given its claim to be non-denominational in character. Students of different church backgrounds were now able to meet and debate and very often, after graduation, work together on the mission field. In our church the regular teaching, which is our core consideration in this article, matched such an open attitude, focusing not only on dogma but also on social issues. The church members' reaction varied, but it was positive in general. Together with the new content of the teaching, its form also started to change so as to match the culture of the audience. We wanted to allow for open discussions or dialogue among other more traditional forms. We were able to try these out more easily because our group at that time was about forty people.

The teaching in places was radical. For example on one occasion when the subject of the sermon was the Pharisees' attitude towards Jesus

---

<sup>12</sup> M Patalon, 'Starzeję się?', *Parakletos* 5/94, p. 1.

the teaching was presented in the form of an open court trial. The person under investigation was an anonymous Pharisee representing a person who treats his own culture as superior to another. And although during that service we did not reach any final conclusion we were able to name and put forward our views on the topic and, what is more important, reflect on it, rethinking the issue and bravely asking ourselves whether there is anything of a stigmatised Pharisee in us. Step by step, in this new kind of pedagogics, we were abandoning the attitude that did not leave much space for self-reflection and independent conclusion. Our fascination with Jesus as a teacher and his object-teaching in parables, rooted in everyday life situations, was an unending source of inspiration. Another sermon preached by one of the leaders resembled more a happening rather than a regular church talk. Everybody was asked to take off one shoe and to put it in the middle of the room. Then the 'preacher' mixed all the gathered shoes, tied them and in this way referred to the apostle Paul's command that our feet should always be fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace (Eph. 6,15). It was one of the most controversial church services I had ever participated in but also one of the most fruitful.

## **The Work of Evangelism**

I was also re-thinking the balance between words and deeds in evangelism. Neither school nor any other kind of teaching can end in a classroom or a church building. I wrote in our church periodical in 1992:

Evangelism is not a short or a long term act. It's my life which either is or isn't evangelism. Such an assumption has at least two main implications. First, I am set free from stressful and artificial acts of evangelism, which allows me to be myself. Second, my every thought, word or act is motivated by that and hence becomes a proclamation of my faith.<sup>13</sup>

If someone decides to become a teacher that person's life must also become visible for their disciples and students, allowing their students to observe their life in times of crisis and extreme trial. That is why Jesus' attitude was the most vivid example for us. As a result of this reflection I decided to open my home to people who were invited to share our time during family meals, film watching or ordinary walks. I was aware that there are certain limits to this, especially concerning the privacy of our family life, but I viewed such a lifestyle as the only option for the teacher which I myself wanted to be. In this way the transition from the 'church' time to the 'after church' time one was no longer marked. Everything began to have an educational value.

---

<sup>13</sup> M Patalon, 'Skuteczna ewangelizacja', *Parakletos*, 5/92, p. 1.

Real pedagogics can only be achieved when the teacher is involved in the disciples' lives and that is why we were keen to take up secular jobs – as a high school teacher, university professor or business person. On this common and neutral ground a teacher and a student could carry on practical discourse. But some of the new converts who joined our church were definitely not in university or the business world. Some originated from the marginalised part of society. For example, from the areas of poverty there were former drug addicts who perceived God as the one who could bring some solid value into their existence. In such circumstances we needed to be aware that a multicultural fellowship of believers can lead to a sense of loss of our own religious culture – e.g. as to the question whether anyone can say anything about somebody else's salvation. Who can judge which of two people has God's favour: the one who is a decent, non-smoking and non-drinking citizen attending church regularly or the constantly stumbling drug addict or alcoholic? I suggested to the church that we can only follow humbly Jesus' teaching: 'don't judge and you won't be judged yourselves – in every aspect of your life.'<sup>14</sup>

Some church members were scandalised with such 'novelties' and left to join other fellowships, but the church was steadily increasing in number and soon the club venue could not hold all our members. We were ready to move back to the chapel. For the previous couple of years people from the neighbourhood had become used to the fact that the church building was not a holy place itself, therefore they were more keen to accept us as a fellowship rather than a church. After having finished the renovation, we moved into our traditional German chapel – at least outwardly that is what it was. The inside of it resembled a youth club rather than a regular 'sacred place of worship'. There was a bar, a garage for bikes, and abstract pictures on the walls which were quite contrary to Protestant austere symbolism. Our new direction of mission work brought young people from artistic backgrounds searching for something new.

Among the new people was a hard rock group called Rainforest, rejected by traditional evangelical churches and treated as a threat to traditional values due to their different way of dressing – including pierced parts of the body, tattoos, loud music, etc. At that time one of the pastors in Wrocław condemned hard rock music as originating from Satan and said that there should be no place for it in any Christian fellowship. However, we started co-operating with the group. Rainforest had developed, by this time, a wide range of various ministries with the so-called 'Supper with Rainforest' as a central event. At this jam-session style concert the

---

<sup>14</sup> M Patalon, 'Nie sądzicie!', *Parakletos*, 6/92, p. 2.

musicians were able to communicate the Christian faith to their young fans using their language and culture. The manager of the group wrote:

We are aiming at evangelising the young rebellious generation. We want to share the gospel on the basis of rock music concerts because that is what is most natural for them. All youth culture is based on music. In it they can express their anger, frustration, dreams and hopes. We want to share with them what God has done in our lives and ensure that their lives can be changed too. We are grateful that God has gifted us and provided for this kind of ministry. We want our music to be really good and professional. People who get interested in God during our concerts are then invited to a monthly event – ‘Supper with Rainforest’ – where live music is played (everyone can perform on stage). People give their testimonies about becoming a Christian and the word of God is preached in order to reach and lead those who have just been saved or are still searching for God. But emphasis is placed on individual talks over a shared meal. We want to befriend our peers. We want to be a testimony that God is real. Apart from Wrocław our ‘Suppers’ are organised in other towns in the south of Poland in Katowice, Dąbrowa and Elk.<sup>15</sup>

After the group joined our church, church attendance increased sharply. The dynamic growth could have been questioned by many theologians. Was there proper doctrinal correctness? Is it right to use so many new ways in which to express faith? In 1998 and 2000 I had the privilege of participating in a Christian festival of young people who were attracted by the ‘Rainforest’ activity. There were over one thousand people, both believers and non-believers, who came for ‘Slot Total Festival’ in the Polish town of Gizięcino in the north-east of the country. It was a manifestation of freedom and not just fun. I was fascinated by the crowd of people originating from different subcultures gathering around Jesus Christ. Three huge stages set in different parts of the town were used for afternoon and evening concerts; different kinds of workshops, seminars and lectures were provided for the participants, and it culminated in a techno-party. It all seemed like something reminiscent of the famous Woodstock festival. Sebastian Pawłowski, the director of the festival, in his letter to the sponsors, wrote that the event was being organised with the purpose of helping young people find and develop their skills and talents but that the key focus was to help them express themselves in an ever-changing world which often deprives them of the chance to find their own identity. The aim to enable people to name and fulfil their aims, passions and dreams should also, I consider, be the starting point for the church.

---

<sup>15</sup> S Pawłowski, ‘Rainforest’, *Parakletos* 12/95, p. 1.

## Conclusion

After having observed various aspects of Baptist leaders' ministries in Poland – especially in the Wroclaw area – I would like to specify the following foundations on which practical church pedagogics may be based.

First, the church and 'the world' should not be viewed as opposing forces. Instead the church and the world should derive from one another's experience. This will be of great help in Christian communication.

Second, variety can be seen as a virtue. Practical ecumenical attitudes allow the free flow of ideas, reciprocal influences and adjustments according to the challenges of the present age. Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox visions joined together could form a common foundation for solving the problem of the disappearing identity of the church in postmodern times. The teaching in the church should be aimed at leading believers towards spiritual maturity, seen as involving an independent and critical assessment of different experiences. This in effect leads to varied forms of teaching, discussion and collective discovery of the truth instead of lecturing.

The third factor is the importance of the teachers' lives being accessible for the sake of their disciples, following Jesus' example. Text books and lectures without the support of life experiences are invalid and lack effectiveness.

Fourth, assistance in the self-development of a disciple should be emphasised, instead of providing students with a pre-assumed programme perceived as the 'right' way. Finally, members and leaders in the church who seek to communicate the faith must be actively involved in society in order to live out the values they preach. Christianity is not simply a belief in clearly defined dogmas but is a journey that is undertaken in partnership and that has as its ultimate goal the uncovering of the infinite divine Mystery.

**Dr Mirosław Patalon** is a pastor of 2nd Baptist Church, Gdansk, and also a teacher of church growth at the Baptist Theological Seminary in Warsaw. He graduated from that Seminary in 1988 with a licentiate of theology, then gained a Masters in Religious Education in 1997 from Warsaw Theological Academy. In 1999 he obtained his PhD in pedagogics from Gdansk University.



## THEOLOGY IN THE SERVICE OF THE CHURCH

*The following is a summary of one of the sessions at the European Baptist Theological Teachers' Conference held at IBTS in June 2001.*

### Introduction

The title given for this session sounds disarmingly simple. Like most things the more you examine it the more complex it becomes. For instance, our overall theme concerns doing theology in a new Europe and therefore the title of the session is an invitation to speak to the contemporary situation. Yet Europe is a large and diverse continent and the situations we represent are very varied. We come from many cultures and contexts where what is needed from theology may be very different. We range from the relatively newly liberated countries of the East to the highly secularised countries of the North and West to the Islamic countries of the Middle East. Furthermore we come from different Baptist cultures where the difference between our varied assumptions and experiences are very great. Our traditions of doing theology may be very different. Indeed there is a valuable study waiting to be done of the different ways of doing theology, especially ecclesiology, within European Baptist communions.

Then there is the question of who is doing theology. Theology is actually alive and well and thriving. The British Association of Centres for Adult Theological Education bulletin tells us that there are over 100 centres apart from universities in which theological education of some kind is taking place. Ways of doing theology in these many centres are once more very varied. In this paper we cannot begin to address this breadth of variety. However, we need to record here that we represent in this conference quite overwhelmingly a distinctive phenomenon – private institutions engaged in higher theological education with a confessional and vocational dimension.

This session must touch upon the relationship of such institutions as our own and of the theology we engage in to the churches we claim to serve. Here there is a complex of issues about how theological educators such as ourselves view those churches and the relation of our task to them, and how they view us. Sometimes there is a high level of financial dependence upon the unions we serve and so of accountability and control. At other times there is a high degree of independence. How do we express our links to the churches we claim to serve?

Then, not to be neglected, there are issues of content – what is the

content of our theology and how does that serve the churches? Is there anything we should be doing about curriculum so that what we teach is seen to be more directly in the service of the churches?

### **An overall framework**

Christian Theology properly understood can neither be separated from the church nor can it truly be anything other than a service to the church. Here, an immediate word of caution needs to be expressed. Talking of theology and of the church as though they are two separate and distinct realms is itself unhelpful. If theology is talk of God then the whole life of the church is theological. Theology is immediately and inevitably present in the act of believing, in our preaching and teaching, in our liturgy, in our practice of ministry and of mission. The only proper distinction to be drawn at this point concerns what is to be deemed as implicit theology (assumed in everything we do) and what is explicit theology (the product of a self-conscious discipline of reflection). We might see this as a distinction between informal or unintentional theology and formal or intentional theology. Theology is the church itself reflecting self-consciously upon the content of its faith.

There is no Christian theology apart from the church since theology is in essence *fides quaerens intellectum*, faith searching for understanding. At the heart of this faith are a number of particularities, realities which are given which are not themselves deductions from general principles or abstract beliefs. I refer to the givenness of Jesus Christ, the actuality of atonement, the reality of resurrection, the presence of the Holy Spirit, the witness of the Scriptures. It is in the good of these realities that the church exists and theology is the church's conscious reflection upon the things which are given. The church is the community in which the power of these realities continues to be known and experienced. Theology is that aspect of faith which reflects upon and articulates the meaning and significance of this givenness. Its service to the church is the application of thought, reason, reflection and debate to what is received by faith. Christian theology therefore has no existence apart from this community and these given realities.

What theology adds to this enterprise of believing and obeying is the dimension of the critical, of evaluative thought and committed debate. To grasp this is, in my experience, quite crucial in understanding the service that theology offers to the church. In teaching undergraduates there comes a point where this shift has to be negotiated. It is the shift from regarding the Bible and the doctrinal content of faith in a merely devotional and

‘naïve’<sup>1</sup> way to approaching them critically and questioningly. This dimension needs to be understood. Being critical is not the same as being hostile. Michael Polanyi’s developed connected themes in his epistemology in which his concern was to discover ‘how I may hold fast to what I firmly believe whilst at the same time recognising that I might be mistaken’. For those who are to engage in the service of the church in theological enquiry this duality, of believing whilst simultaneously questioning what I believe, is a necessary skill to be learnt. For many whose theology is implicit and informal this feels threatening on the basis that if what I believe is questionable it is therefore untenable. To be dependable it must be beyond question. The skill of theological enquiry involves indwelling the reality of God, of Christ, of the Spirit, of atonement, of the church, of hope whilst recognising that the thought forms and language which I use to describe those realities is provisional. This is not to say that it is untrue but that however truly it may point me to the truth it remains perfectible, improvable. Doctrinal statements are only every ‘subordinate standards’ in the Christian church, subject to the higher authority of Scripture. Not to acknowledge this would be to make of language and doctrine an idol, an ultimate in an age when we are only capable of the penultimate. Our theology is not identical with Godself, however well it might witness to God. The miracle is that by grace such language can be adequate even when we know it to be inadequate.

This enterprise can be experienced as deeply exciting or as deeply unsettling. The goal of theological education is not to rob people of faith but to enable them to make the transition to holding a ‘critical faith’ in the firm belief that there is what Paul Riceour called ‘the second naivety’, the place of believing simplicity that lies beyond the work of critical study and yet is deepened and extended by that study. In this way theology is not the rival or enemy of faith but the handmaiden of the church.

## The ministry of theology

What tasks belong to this ministry of service?

1. **Working with the Bible.** It is an unwise assumption that the Bible has only one message which it utters in an identical way at each point. There is indeed what Luther called the ‘perspicuity of Scripture’, its basic comprehensibility. But the way believers have heard such different things in Scripture alerts us immediately to the fact that it is not so simple. The Bible is as complex as the architecture of a cathedral; it is as rich as a well-worked symphony. The Bible might best be

---

<sup>1</sup> It is my desire in this paper to use this word in a positive rather than negative way and to avoid the suggestion of the inferiority of the ‘naïve’ and the superiority of the ‘critical’.

viewed as a developing conversational dialogue in which there are dissonant voices and unexpected testimonies. Yet through these there is also an emerging testimony and advocacy. Biblical scholars help the church to listen carefully and at depth to what is there spoken.

2. **Working with the tradition.** Theologians are involved in a conversation which embraces those who have gone before, and part of their task is to make available to the churches of the present the wisdom of the past. Tradition should not be regarded here as that will to keep things as they are and unchanging but as an essentially biblical concept whereby the wisdom of the past is passed down to the present to address contemporary reality. Our reading of the Bible is immediately shaped by a tradition which draws our attention to what has been deemed to be most important. Theologians listen to the tradition and they seek to apply it in the contemporary world.
3. **Working with the context.** The context also has authority. It is demonstrable that there is no reading of the Bible which is not shaped by the context in which it is read. It may question that context and often does, but we tend to hear what our context allows us or predisposes us to hear. Each culture poses questions to the text of Scripture and the tradition of belief that enable us to hear new depths in them.

The ministry of theology is therefore to engage in a dialogue between text, tradition and world which mediates the Word of God into present reality. Theology helps us to clarify what is the Word of God, the essence and substance of the biblical witness. It shows how the tradition has enabled us to give expression faithfully to that Word. It shows us how that Word might be heard in certain ways by our context. Theology gives coherence and shape to what is believed, bringing out its inherent truth and coherence, displaying its beauty and its attractiveness, showing how it meets the needs of human persons and human communities. It elucidates what it might mean for the social, civic and political realms. In the process it subverts totalitarian claims and dominant cultures and invites us to think differently and imaginatively about a universe which is suffused with God.

### **How might we then serve?**

Some negatives are in order. First, theology is not there to tell the church what it may or may not believe. This is to assume a position of superiority not of service. Yes, it must elucidate the Word of God, mediate the wisdom of the tradition and offer correction in the light of the church's normative authorities. But it is not to be an elitist activity in which some who 'know better' hand down the truth to the ignorant. Second, theology is not there to

subvert the faith of the faithful. Yes, it should question false absolutes by means of which we think we have already arrived at a full knowledge of the truth and it must uncover poor and shoddy thinking, but it is not given to rob people of their convictions. Third, theology is not there to mediate the dictates of modernity to an otherwise backward community. Modernity is not a criterion of truth. Something is not untrue just because 'nobody believes that any more'. Yes, culture is there to be listened to and all truth is God's truth. But it is not the role of theology to serve as the agent of the spirit of the age but to subvert the spirit of the age by its vision of God.

Rather, by contrast, theology is to be a constructive discipline which adds to the strength and conviction of the church. We need a constructive theology which ministers to faith, and theological reflection has huge power to do this as it opens up God's truth.

Theology is also to be a confessional discipline which keeps faith with the tradition in which it stands. There are of course some complex issues here. All doctrinal standards and statements need to be seen as provisional and so they are capable of changing. Academic freedom and theological accountability will sometimes be held in tension. We should not wish to take away the freedom to explore but neither do we wish to legitimate theological anarchy.

Linked with this, theology is to be an ecclesial discipline which remains close to the churches and works with them rather than alienating them. Churches and seminaries are in a partnership. Seminaries serve the church by offering training in theology and ministry. Churches need to send people to seminaries so that their training might be deepened and enriched. In my own context in Britain there is an extended process of testing a call both before and during seminary training. This is part of a tradition of an educated ministry and of preparing 'able, evangelical ministers' which goes back to the founding of the oldest Baptist College in Bristol.

Theology is to be a lifelong process of growth in wisdom and insight. The first years of study should increasingly be seen as initial training to be followed by lifelong ministry development. Theology is also to be a practical discipline. It should make ministers into better practitioners of their calling and it should be concerned with the development of healthy and effective church life.

Finally, theology is to be a redemptive discipline which opens up new possibilities for lost and alienated people and which is never an abstract discipline unrelated to the actual life of people.

## The challenges to theological teachers

We should be clear that in talking as we have we are ultimately concerned with the kind of people, those such as ourselves, theological teachers, are called to be. Like preaching, theological truth is mediated through personality. There is therefore a call to tutors of theology to take their task with the utmost seriousness. This involves seeing ourselves –

1. As being in the service of constructive theology with the intention of building up the church in its faith. In a new Europe this surely involves holding conviction without fundamentalism, being contemporary without yielding to assimilation, being distinctive without being separatist, principled without being impersonal (so that in expressing high principle we do not forget that we are dealing with people) and in being public without being punitive, arguing for the truth of God in the public arena without attacking those who disagree.
2. As being ministers who hold office as teachers within the church of God. There are sometimes unhelpful attitudes to overcome here as, for instance, when teachers of theology are described as having ‘left’ the ministry. But there are also assumptions that tutors make which suggest that they are doers of a job rather than exercisers of a ministry. In the service of the church of God the role of theological teachers is a ministry and as such it calls for the same quality of availability to God and others that ministers are called upon to offer.
3. As those who are in the service of the Word of God and its transmission to our generation. We are called to be deeply immersed in the Scriptures and also to be deeply immersed in the tradition of the church which has heard that Word and sought to live in its service.
4. As church people who are committed to the life of the church and love the church, who are walking the way of discipleship and growing in spiritual depth in order that they may bear witness to God’s Word freshly and creatively in a world which greatly needs to hear it.

**Dr Nigel G Wright** is Principal of Spurgeon’s College, London. He is Vice-president of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and serves as moderator of its Doctrine and Worship Committee. He is also chair of the Baptist World Alliance Study Commission on Christian Ethics. A well-published author, his best known books include *The Fair Face of Evil: Putting the Power of Darkness in its Place* (1989); *Challenge to Change: A Radical Agenda for Baptists* (1991); *The Radical Evangelical: Finding a Place to Stand* (1996); and *Disavowing Constantine: Mission Church and the Social Order in the theologies of John Howard Yoder and Jurgen Moltmann* (2000).

# THE ROLE OF *TOTUUDEN KAIKU*<sup>1</sup> IN DEFINING THE IDENTITY OF THE FINNISH-SPEAKING BAPTISTS

## 1. Introduction

The periodical *Totuuden Kaiku* represents the most comprehensive primary source material about the thinking of the early Finnish-speaking Baptists. No critical study has been done on the periodical and its meaning for the life of the Finnish-speaking Baptists. This study is based on the first seven years of its publication, i.e. 1896–1902, when the Finnish-speaking Baptists still worked together with the Swedish-speaking Baptists. After that they went their separate ways, with the Finnish-speaking Baptists deciding to form their own union.

The periodical played a prominent part in forming the identity of Finnish-speaking Baptists even before they existed as their own Union. There was first of all an aggressive stage when Baptist doctrine was defined as against the prevailing Lutheran position. Following a change of the editor-in-chief there was also a change in editorial approach. Evangelism and the gentler aspects of the Christian faith were given a prominent role. From the very beginning there were news and articles from other Baptist papers to widen the view of the readers and to create a feeling of belonging to a wider unity of Baptists. Language plays an important role when speaking about identity. This was the big issue of the time in the whole of society in Finland. There were two important Civil Movements – folk enlightenment and temperance. In a small way *Totuuden Kaiku* was a part of these movements. Its subtitle runs: ‘A periodical standing for Christian truth, temperance and folk enlightenment’. These aspects are the ones to be examined.

## 2. Baptist Identity and the Lutheran Church

From the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Lutheran faith was the only official religion, not only in Sweden-Finland, but throughout the whole of Scandinavia. Religious liberty was to come about 250 years later to that corner of the world, so Lutheranism was deeply rooted in its soil.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> English translation, *The Echo of Truth*.

<sup>2</sup> L S Hunter, *Scandinavian Churches: A picture of the development and life of the churches of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), pp. 38-39.

The Baptist Movement was the first free church to enter Finland. When *Totuuden Kaiku* started to be published in 1896 Finland already had 40 years of Baptist history, and it was not even the first Finnish Baptist periodical. The Swedish-speaking Baptists' *Finska Månadsposten* had started publication in September 1892.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw a new awakening of Pietistic revival movements in Finland.<sup>3</sup> Unlike in Sweden these movements stayed within the Lutheran Church.<sup>4</sup> The Pietists stressed many of the issues that were also important to Baptists. They represented a Christianity that had to touch body and soul, understanding and will, and was also capable of reforming them. Belonging to the church and participating in the services was not enough; it was necessary to have personal faith in Christ. The Bible was seen as the word of the living God. It gave all the answers, and the learned ones, 'know-it-all' people (i.e. the Lutheran priests), were not needed. The role of lay people was stressed. The Pietists' main doctrines were those concerning sin and grace, and 'life, not doctrine' was important. During the latter part of the century these movements started to clarify their doctrines, and to organise themselves within the Lutheran Church.<sup>5</sup>

Against this background it was obvious that the members of the small community of Baptists had to define their own standpoint concerning their doctrine, and how it differed from Lutheran doctrine and from the Pietistic Movement. To make their voice heard in a wider context a Baptist periodical was of great importance. The Swedish Baptist paper did not help the Finnish-speaking Baptists, the great majority of whom did not know any Swedish. They were very small in number and belonged to peasant and lower classes, as was true of Baptists elsewhere in Europe.<sup>6</sup>

It showed great courage as well as inner determination to start publishing a periodical for little more than the 300 Finnish-speaking Baptists of the time. For the first two years of publication the circulation amounted to 500 copies. Without the help of Finns who had moved to America and confessed Baptist faith it would not have been possible at all.

During the time examined here *Totuuden Kaiku* had two editors-in-chief. Veikko Palomaa was the man who saw the necessity for the

<sup>3</sup> There were two opposite views in the Pietistic Movement: One stressed that you can only long for God's grace; the other convinced people that on the basis of God's promises of grace you may boldly and wholeheartedly surrender to him. D Edén, *Svenska Baptisternas i Finland Historia 1856-1931* (Vasa: 1930), p. 44.

<sup>4</sup> G Westin, *Den kristna församlingen i Norden. Frikyrklighetens uppkomst och utveckling* (Stockholm: Ernst Westerbergs Bokfr.- och Förlags ab, 1956), p. 333.

<sup>5</sup> E Murtorinne, *Suomen kirkon historia 3* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1995), pp. 104-6.

<sup>6</sup> D R Kirkwood, (ed.), *European Baptists: a magnificent minority*, n.p., (1981), p. 8.



periodical. He established it, applied for permission to publish it,<sup>7</sup> and was also its first editor (1896-1898). He was very gifted in languages, and translated many articles and vignettes from Swedish, French, English, German, and Italian. After him John G. Kokki became the editor-in-chief, remaining for the longest duration in the history of the periodical, namely from August 1898 to 1931 – this study concentrates on the first four years of his editorship. These two editors were very different: Palomaa was a man of great passion, who very aggressively defended Baptist doctrines, whereas Kokki was more adjusting and balanced in addressing Baptist views. They are examined separately.

### **Palomaa's period (1896<sup>8</sup> – 1898)**

Veikko Palomaa was in many ways an exceptional man. Although coming from a very poor family, his eagerness to learn opened for him the possibility to enter the Finnish secondary school in Turku. This was very rare at that time. Only about 2000 Finnish-speaking students had this privilege.<sup>9</sup> He studied for seven years, but had to leave because of lack of money. From the pages of *Totuuden Kaiku* it is easy to see, however, that he had gained an extensive knowledge of many subjects. In addition to good language skills he knew a great deal about Church History.

The most striking feature of Veikko Palomaa's time is his strong position against the national Lutheran Church. He gives much space to articles concerning this and does not hesitate to write about Lutheran doctrine as heresy. He follows the same line as the first Finnish Baptists, whom Edén classifies as 'revolutionary idealists', who radically opposed the prevalent thinking about baptism, communion, and the church.<sup>10</sup> His expressions are colourful; he does not tone down his words, as this extract from one of his editorials shows (it covers 3 pages of a total of 8 in this issue):

The state churches established during the 'Reformation' have common ground with the papal church... [They are] full of blasphemers of God... [People] whom the state church turns into non-believing Christians... A miserable church that produces Christians like that! ... They have kept the mark of the beast, infant baptism as their most precious means of grace. *Totuuden Kaiku*, February 1896.

<sup>7</sup> V Toivola, *Totuuden Kaiku – Kodin Ystävä 100 vuotta, 1896-1996* (Tampere: Suomen Baptistiyhdyskunta, 1996), p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> There was an introductory issue in February, *Totuuden Kaiku*, 1896, published mainly to arouse the interest for subscribing to the new periodical.

<sup>9</sup> Rosendhal – Saija, *Ajasta aikaan* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1995, 6. painos), p.40.

<sup>10</sup> Edén, *Svenska*, p. 68.

There is not a single issue of *Totuuden Kaiku* where infant baptism is not mentioned as the wrong way to baptise. In *Totuuden Kaiku* in May 1896 Palomaa's editorial is titled; 'Infant Baptism as a Means of Grace'. He writes how infant baptism has not led anybody to Christ; on the contrary, thousands and millions have been drawn away from Christ through it. He goes on to mention martyrs who were executed because they did not believe in infant baptism. And, he continues, Luther and Melancton were among those who wanted all Baptists (he must have meant Anabaptists here) to be killed. There are also many personal stories of how people were converted, and baptised as believers.

Amazingly, there was only one article about communion (the Lord's Supper) during Palomaa's time. It is not written against the Lutheran view but against the view of the Finnish Free Evangelical Church (and this is not the only article against that movement) that had entered Finnish soil in 1880.<sup>11</sup> The Movement is criticised because it accepted those who were baptised as infants to partake in the Lord's Supper. Jaakko Nostaja, a Baptist preacher from Jurva, writes:

The apostolic teaching shows that immersion and the Lord's supper are so close to each other, that no one can separate them. You cannot take one, and leave the other... First comes faith, then immersion and last comes the Lord's supper, e.g. the taking of bread and wine as a remembrance of Christ's death... This is the order of the Great Command of our great Teacher. *Totuuden Kaiku*, April 1897.

Nostaja goes on, warning that they should beware because Christ will tell them in the last day: 'Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity. I do not know you.' He also tells how when he once entered a Free Church home, and asked if there were God's children in the house, he got but one trembling positive answer; the other five adults did not say anything. This he seemed to interpret as meaning that those five could not be sure of their salvation.

The biblical doctrine espoused by Baptists was also stressed in attacks against Roman Catholics and Anglicans as well as against Zwingli and Calvin. Nothing is said about the Greek Orthodox Church, though that was to become another official church in Finland.

In the second issue of 1897 a Baptist principle<sup>12</sup> is expressed, one that came to prevail in Finnish Baptist thinking until the 1980s. Palomaa asks if the title 'pastor' may be used of any of the elders (the Finnish Baptist congregations have a board of elders leading the local work) in a

<sup>11</sup> Westin, *Den kristna*, p. 356.

<sup>12</sup> The author of the article is often left out in the early issues of *Totuuden Kaiku*, which is the case here. The author uses, however, both Greek and Latin, which indicates that he has fair knowledge of both, and thus he is almost inevitably V Palomaa.

Baptist church. His answer is an emphatic ‘no’. This word is seen as ‘a papal leaven.’ For him the association of this word with Lutheran pastors is dangerous, leading people to think about a person wearing bands and a black robe. This seems strange because the servants of the Lutheran church were not called pastors, but rather priests. Palomaa’s view is that, in fact, no titles at all should be used; they are too showy. Only towards the end of the 1980s did ‘pastor’ displace ‘preacher’ in the praxis of the Finnish Baptist Union.

Another word that was not used was ‘church’. Baptist people belonged to Baptist ‘congregations’. The church was seen as representing all the evils of ‘that odd institution, which has fascinated the mighty ones of this world’ (*Totuuden Kaiku* 5/98). Even today some Finnish Baptists are strict about not using the word ‘church’ at all, while others understand these two words to mean different things; a church is a building where people gather together to worship the Lord whereas a congregation refers to members of a local Baptist community. Those not using the word church at all call their building ‘a prayer house’.

### **Kokki’s period (1898 onwards)**

There is a short notice about the change of the editor-in-chief in *Totuuden Kaiku*, August 1898. The new editor, John G. Kokki states: ‘We aim at getting the content of the periodical as constructive and varied as possible with the restricted space it offers us.’ As to variety, *Totuuden Kaiku* seems to have fulfilled that aim during Palomaa’s time. Concerning constructiveness, there may be a hint in the announcement that this had not been a feature. Certainly the editorial position changed in a constructive direction. From other sources we understand that Palomaa had to leave his position because of his dawning theosophical views, and his disputes with the Swedish-speaking Baptist leaders.<sup>13</sup>

Under Kokki there are articles about believers’ baptism and other purely doctrinal matters, but they are not given such prominence, and their tone is no longer so aggressive, with the exception of a series of articles that Veikko Palomaa had translated from Swedish into Finnish, but which was published only during Kokki’s time. A Finn (*J. L-d:ia*, his full name is not mentioned), who had moved to Sweden and become a Baptist there, tells his story. The language he uses against the Lutheran Church and its doctrine is very similar to that of Palomaa. After a transitional stage – one cannot avoid the feeling that the change of the editor-in-chief happened quite unexpectedly – the new editor found what was to become his own style. While Palomaa stressed purely doctrinal issues, Kokki’s emphasis is

<sup>13</sup> Toivola, *Totuuden Kaiku – Kodin Ystävä*, p. 6.

on the spreading of the gospel. When writing to the subscribers of *Totuuden Kaiku* in December 1899, he says:

To spread and to advance the Kingdom of God on earth will be the first and the last aim of *Totuuden Kaiku* during the coming new year... The God of Peace Himself bless us and give us His abundant grace and wisdom and thus help us to edit *Totuuden Kaiku* according to His will, and may the bright light of His truth shine from its pages.

There is a clear shift here. The doctrinal foundation had more or less been laid; it was time to leave the internal things, like Baptist doctrine, and to look outwards. The Finnish-speaking Baptists were strongly encouraged to reach other people with the gospel, and the periodical was offered as one means to achieve that goal. It was suggested to every reader, that he/she should get at least one subscriber outside the Baptist congregation, and even pay for the subscription. Another good way would be to give the periodical away after it was read. Lutherans – about 95% of the people – were seen from now on as a target group for evangelisation.

Personal testimonies start to appear, as well as writings that are like short revival sermons. Winning souls ought to be ‘the passion of every believer’. Christian behaviour as a testimony to non-believers is also dealt with; an extract from the article ‘A Christian – the Bible of the World’ serves as a good example:

The most effective means of persuading and winning souls to Jesus, is to let them see from our very life, that we are faithful, righteous, happy, and holy people... The believer is the only Bible that the world reads. *Totuuden Kaiku*, May 1899.

We can find a new emphasis on both praying and reading the Bible regularly, because they have an impact on the every day life of a Christian. Articles published that concentrated on gentler aspects of Christian living. There are articles such as ‘Joy and Sweetness’, ‘What is Loveable’, ‘Forgiveness’, and ‘Friendliness’. All these qualities are presented as an effective way of witnessing to the world. They were surely also needed to help create a different atmosphere in Baptist congregations. When purely doctrinal things are stressed people tend to become critical, and the golden rule of loving one another is put into the background.

The new emphasis on the need to evangelise had good results. Finnish-speaking Baptists grew rapidly. The first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the most successful period in their history so far. Thirteen new congregations were established, most of them in Eastern Finland.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Hughey, Kolomainen and Toivola, *Baptistit* (Jyväskylä, Raamattuopisto), p. 123-124. (The year of publication is not mentioned, but it must be 1970 or later, because the statistics used in the book are from the year 1970.)

### 3. The Role of the Wider Baptist Community

Identity is best found in relation to something or somebody. Right from the beginning there were articles and news in *Totuuden Kaiku* from Baptist congregations and unions in other countries. This was very progressive and far-sighted, and shows that the editors understood the importance of connecting this small, embryonic work with the wider context of Baptists for establishing a local Baptist identity. As a matter of fact even the name of the periodical comes from abroad. Veikko Palomaa translated it from French Baptists, whose periodical was *L'écho de la Vérité*, in Finnish *Totuuden Kaiku*.

As stated before, Palomaa was very gifted in languages. Among the Baptist periodicals to which he subscribed were *The Baptist Missionary Magazine* (Boston, USA), *Der Wahrheitszeugen* (Hamburg), *L'écho de la Vérité* (Paris), and *Il Testimonio* (Italy).<sup>15</sup> He also translated news and sometimes articles from *Wecko-Posten* (Stockholm).

Palomaa seems to have had a special fondness for French Baptists. For the first issue of *Totuuden Kaiku* he translated the article: 'What is a Baptist Congregation?' by J. Sainton, which included advice about the founding and developing of a local church. As a series of articles, a longer story, 'Preacher and Peasant', by Paul Passy was translated. It tells about the conversation between these two – the preacher and the peasant – about baptism, and ends with the peasant's decision 'to join a believers' church, to be baptised by immersion there according to my faith the same way as the first disciples' (*Totuuden Kaiku*, May 1896). For the most part the translations are, however, just short stories or news:

**Russia.** Baptists, who speak German, Estonian, Polish, Swedish, Finnish etc., have left the Lutheran, The Reformed, and The Roman Catholic Churches. They are enjoying a considerable freedom, if only they do not practice proselytising outside their congregations... In St. Petersburg they have a congregation with 511 members. All the Baptist Churches belong to the Baptist Association, the committee of which has seven members. The number of churches is 317. The number of Baptists in the whole of Russia is 17,606. *Totuuden Kaiku*, February 1896.

During Kokki's time many long revival sermons by two great preachers of that century, namely Charles H. Spurgeon and Dwight L. Moody, were published. This is in line with Kokki's editorial position that stressed evangelism. News and short stories from abroad were also published regularly. Another way to get news from abroad was through Finns who had moved to America. They were writing regularly; many of them were telling how they, often former Lutherans, were converted in

<sup>15</sup> Toivola, *Totuuden Kaiku – Kodin Ystävä*, p. 13.

America, joined a Baptist Church, and now wanted to encourage Baptists in their home country.

## 4. Baptist Identity and the Civil Movements in Finland

### The Language Question

At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Finnish was a fairly undeveloped language. Religious literature was the only available material published in Finnish. This was certainly due to the long history of Finland being under Sweden. The official language was still, in spite of Russian Rule, Swedish. Tsar Alexander I did not use Swedish, of course, but spoke French with the Finnish intelligentsia.<sup>16</sup>

The National Awakening happened thanks to three men, Elias Lönnrot, Johan L. Runeberg, and Johan W. Snellman, all of whom began their studies at Turku Academy in 1822. The Society of Finnish Literature was established in 1831, mainly to promote the use of the national language and to develop it. This did not happen without considerable struggle.<sup>17</sup> There were two language parties, one called The Fennomans, who supported Finnish, the other The Swekomans, the advocates of Swedish. In 1902 equality of languages was declared, but it was not until the 1930s that the language feud really settled down.<sup>18</sup>

The feud in society must have affected the Finnish-speaking Baptists. The first clear indication of that is of course the Finnish periodical itself. In *Totuuden Kaiku* in July 1897 we can read about how this question was connected with Baptist work among the Finnish-speaking population. It was commented that only a few Finnish-speaking Baptists attended the Annual Meetings of the Union because very few of them knew any Swedish. Thus it was a frustrating experience for them to attend those meetings. The article goes on to mention that only a few items were translated from Swedish into Finnish, and that was not enough for the Finnish-speaking delegates to have any effect on the things discussed there.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> J Ekonen, V Kulju, T Mantsinen and J Tarkka, *Ihmisen tiet* (Otava, Helsinki-Keuruu: 1995, 3-4 painos), p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. pp. 11-17. One of the hottest issues was the Finnish secondary school. The Swedish officers tried to hinder in all possible ways the establishing of these schools. This led the Fennomans to turn to the Finnish-speaking Finns for funds to establish them. They succeeded, and from 1895 onwards the Finnish-speaking pupils in secondary schools have outnumbered those of the Swedish-speaking.

<sup>18</sup> Rosendahl and Saija, *Ajasta aikaan*, p. 38.

<sup>19</sup> Hughey, Kolomainen and Toivola give more insight into this matter. Kolomainen tells that the important Swedish speeches and comments in Annual Meetings were translated into Finnish but those held in Finnish were not translated into Swedish, p. 122.

Markku Niskanen refers to the same issue of *Totuuden Kaiku* (July 1897) in his treatise when speaking about the language problem.<sup>20</sup> He claims that Finnish was not used in the Annual Meetings because the Finnish-speaking people very seldom participated in them. Although this was true, it certainly was not the cause but rather the effect of the policy in those meetings. He also mentions that the article in question was the only one dealing with the language problem, which is the case.

In December 1897 an interesting article was published under the title: 'Do Christians have to be neutral in secular affairs?' There the writer deals with the language feud. According to him, most Christians appear to be 'neutral' over these questions, but he doubts if that is possible. At least, he suggests, it does not lead anywhere. And – he goes on – to be neutral means to be indifferent, which is not a proper Christian way.

The Swedish-speaking Baptists noticed, of course, the discussion going on among the Finnish-speaking congregations. They did not want any division to happen. In the ninth issue of *Totuuden Kaiku*, 1898, we read about that, but there was no suggestion from their side to improve the situation, so that the Finnish-speaking congregations would really feel themselves as an integral part of the union. On the contrary, they were rebuked about their intention to depart from the fellowship. I. S. Österman, a Swede who had come as a missionary to help Finnish Baptists in the Bible School (6 weeks twice a year), and who after arriving in Finland was also chosen to edit the Swedish Baptist periodical, wrote about the language question with the title: *A Letter to our Finnish-speaking Friends*:

There are even those, who are not afraid to move this political and social dispute to spiritual matters, and who do ardently wish the same to happen among the Christian brothers speaking different languages. But this is sinful.

He goes on to argue that both Swedish and Finnish-speaking Baptists have so much in common, in spite of different languages, that they should have the feeling of being one. For those who are outside of these debates, it seems to be a ridiculous and vain dispute. And, he states, 'if Christ was able to make the Jews and the Gentiles one because of their faith in him, it must be according to His will, that people with one native country, although speaking a different language, should stay together.' He ends the letter telling about his sympathy with all the inhabitants of the country. 'For children of the same father either being Swedish or Finnish-minded this must be such an inferior thing, that they do not even think about it.'

---

<sup>20</sup> M Niskanen, *The Finnish-speaking Baptists 1896-1922*. A treatise submitted to the Faculty of the Baptist Theological Seminary (Switzerland: Rüschlikon, April 1984), pp. 7-8.

(*Totuuden Kaiku*, September 1898) This article ends the discussion of the language feud in the pages of the periodical.

This does not mean, however, that the question was settled. Mother tongue is an important fact in forming one's identity. This is true for individual human beings and people groups as well as organisations. It was crucial for the Finnish-speaking population, who, since 1155,<sup>21</sup> could not use their native tongue as an official means of communication. This was a decisive thing for the Finnish-speaking Baptists, too, in forming their own Baptist Union as a body separate from the Swedish-speaking Baptists. This decision was made in 1902, and brought into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1903.<sup>22</sup>

### **Folk Enlightenment and Temperance**

Finnish-speaking Baptists seem to have had a suspicious attitude towards education from the very beginning. Palomaa had to defend both the publishing of the periodical and the education of Christians. In *Totuuden Kaiku* in January 1896 he assures the readers that the periodical did not want to replace the Bible. On the contrary, it was trying to help them to pay closer attention to the Bible. Later in the same year (July 1896) there was an article entitled: *Does education hinder Christian life?* The article stated that many would answer; yes. There seem to have been great prejudices against education. Many Christians were thinking that there was no use in knowing 'from where a certain river starts and where it flows into'. The article pointed out that even Jesus' disciples needed teaching and ended up by quoting the Bible: 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'.

The National Awakening brought with it a Folk Enlightenment Movement<sup>23</sup> as well as a Temperance Movement.<sup>24</sup> Both were necessary; the first one influenced mostly the Finnish-speaking population whereas the other gained a footing amongst the Swedish-speaking people as well.

Although Baptists made a clear distinction between secular and spiritual things, and although they had this rather negative view of

<sup>21</sup> Two different years are given in different history books concerning the time when Swedish started to be the official language of Finland. One is 1155 when the Swedes made the first 'crusade' to Finland, the other is 1249. Hunter, pp. 35-41.

<sup>22</sup> *Baptist Work in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden* (Stockholm: Baptistmissionens bokförlags Ab, 1947), p. 45.

<sup>23</sup> In 1866 Tsar Alexander II gave an ordinance for elementary schools. In cities they were obligatory, in the country every commune could decide if it was going to have an elementary school or not. A commune had to start an elementary school, though, if there were enough pupils who wanted it. In spite of these efforts only 40% of children under 15 could read and write at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Especially in the countryside many families did not want to send their children to school, being afraid that that would only estrange them from work. Rosendahl and Saija, *Ajasta aikaan*, pp. 39-40.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42. Public drinking strikes were arranged in Finland, the biggest of which was that of 1898-1899, when 70,000 people promised not to drink for a whole year, and 170,000 signed the petition demanding a prohibition act.



education, they thought that a Christian way to influence one's surroundings was to be light and salt. As a matter of fact, to be true to the task it claimed to have, the periodical had to stand for 'public enlightenment'. The way this was pursued was through the articles about family issues. The topics handled were: How to bring up children; marriage; the relationships between man, wife and children; how to make a happy home; home – a testing place; a spoiled child. Christians were warned not to marry unbelievers. There are even two articles about personal healthcare. Some of the advice given to parents was:

Learn to know the character of every member in the family, and take part in their worries and difficulties, no matter how insignificant they might seem to be.

Beware of all slander, all complaint and all blab, and never listen to those whose habit it is to behave that way.

Always rule with compassion, because that is the way God behaves!  
*Totuuden Kaiku*, May 1900.

The negative standpoint regarding education affected the identity of the Finnish-speaking Baptists – unfortunately in a detrimental way. As time went on members of the Baptist congregations were obtaining more and more education, but as for preachers, people could not really decide if they needed it or not. It was only in 1949 that a Bible School was started to educate preachers, and not even that move settled the question. The dilemma is still there to a certain extent.

With the Temperance Movement, attitudes were totally supportive, which is natural. There were many short stories about the misuse of alcohol in *Totuuden Kaiku*. Most often they appealed to a person's feelings. A drinker is making a speech to young, well-dressed men telling what is waiting for them all if they do not stop drinking. He is someone who has lost everything; his wife, children, home. Now he is but a dying wreck (*Totuuden Kaiku* 11/1899). Another short story tells about a Tavernier who went to see a dying man, asking if the man remembered him. And he did, 'all too well', because his habit of going to the public house had ruined his life. In one vignette, alcohol is even seen as a reason for insanity. It quotes Dr. J. Winslow, an Englishman, who had written a book in which he said:

I have clearly shown, that this [meaning insanity]... depends to a great extent on the awful vice of drunkenness. *Totuuden Kaiku*, September 1899.

The stories were not published because drinking alcohol was a problem found among Baptists. They were total abstainers. The articles may be seen as part of folk enlightenment, meant perhaps for those outside Baptist congregations to whom the periodical was sent as a gift.

## 5. Conclusion

The periodical *Totuuden Kaiku* played a prominent part in forming the identity of the early Finnish-speaking Baptists. The move through an aggressive doctrinal stage to a constructive and more balanced one, with emphasis on outreach, produced good results. News and articles from the wider Baptist context also contributed to the identity of this small Baptist community. The use of Finnish was of crucial importance. It was, crucially, in line with the strivings in the Finnish society of the time.

A negative aspect to the Baptist movement, which *Totuuden Kaiku* tried to address, was the suspicious attitude towards the education of preachers in the early days and even today to some extent. It is apparent that *Totuuden Kaiku* did not succeed in shaping the full range of Baptist thinking and practice. Nevertheless, as has been shown in this article, it did have significant influence.

**Anneli Lohikko** is studying for a Master of Theology degree in Baptist and Anabaptist Studies at IBTS. She has a BA in English and Philology. She is Mission Secretary and Correspondence Secretary of the Finnish-speaking Finnish Baptist Union.

**IBTS is host to the following specialist  
European Baptist Federation Conferences in 2002**

**18-23 January**

**EBF Youth and Children's Workers' Conference**

This annual event draws together those responsible for youth and children's work in our churches and unions  
Organised by the EBF Youth Committee

**23 - 26 October**

**Conference on women in ministry**

An opportunity for women engaged in specialist service within the life of the church to meet together and explore contemporary theological issues in relationship to their work

*For more information keep watching the IBTS web site or email [White@ibts.cz](mailto:White@ibts.cz)*

## BOOK REVIEW

**Sergei Viktorovich Sannikov**

***Twenty Centuries Christianity. Second Millenium. Volume Two***

(In Russian, *Dvadtsat' Vekov Hristianstva. Vtoroe Tisecheletie*, T.2)

Odessa, 'Bogomislie' Publisher, 2001, 704 pp., hardcover, \$20.00

ISBN 966-95823-0-X

Another highly significant book by Sergei Sannikov, a Ukrainian Baptist scholar, is now available within the emerging world of evangelical Christian literature written in Russian. This large and superbly produced book is the second volume of a two-volume set. It lays the foundation and affords a promising beginning for a series of textbooks in historical theology to be published by the Euro-Asian Accreditation Association as part of the 'Biblical Pulpit' project, to meet the needs of all who are seriously engaged in researching, teaching and studying Christian tradition.

This volume on Christian History is intended as a holistic overview of the second millenium of the Christian story (from the parting of eastern and western Christianity to the present day). It is written from the perspective of an insider. While the strong Christian convictions of the author are evident and pronounced, the book avoids the pitfalls of apologetic or confessional biases. It is written objectively and is ecumenical in spirit. The dust cover of the book visualises the author's intention: photos of three of the world's best known spiritual leaders of the Christian community in the twentieth century (Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant) picture the spirit and the purpose of the writer.

The book attempts to present an integral and comprehensive view of the development of Christianity in both East and West. Christianity is considered a global phenomenon, which has its ups and downs, closely tied to the development of the surrounding culture. Sannikov retells the story of a universal (catholic or 'sobornoi') church. This picture of unity, however, does not hide or obscure the rich diversity of movements and personalities in Christian history. The flow of the Christian story is interspersed with a series of vignettes – historical accounts of particularities from the history of theology, personal biographies of the heroes and foes of Christian faith, the church's missionary undertakings, and insights into different Christian traditions and cultures. This neat balance of global vision and a fine taste for detail makes the reading of this work a rewarding experience.

An interesting feature of the book is the author's synoptic historical perspective. He sees Christianity as an ecclesial phenomenon with its own integrity and as a driving force to impact and change all levels of societal life. The history of the Christian religion is a history of a genuine culture

with its intellectual, political and artistic expressions influenced by and penetrating into the fibres of a complex social fabric.

The book's graphics are an achievement in themselves. The text is richly illustrated. Apart from their artistic quality, the illustrations contribute significantly to the didactic purpose of the book. This unique collection of high quality reproductions – from rare manuscripts, pictures, frescos, carvings, sculptures, architectural monuments and even coins – tells the Christian story in artifacts in parallel with the text.

The bibliographical guide to the book exhibits a persistent characteristic of Sannikov's scholarship. I know of no other book in Russian with such a wealth of bibliographical information on sources for historic research – over 1200 works published in Russian and Ukrainian. It is augmented by a unique index of resources available for historical research by electronic means such as the internet. I highly recommend Dr Sannikov's book to students, teachers, scholars and all interested in learning more about the Christian story in the last ten centuries.

**The Revd Dr Parush Parushev**  
Director of Applied Theology, IBTS

## NOTICES

We draw your attention to the following significant recent publications –

**Calvin Redekop**, John Hopkins University Press. 283pp.

***Creation and the Environment: An Anabaptist perspective on a Sustainable World***

Explores Anabaptist insights on the importance of a positive environmental stand.

**David B Lott (ed)**, Alban Institute. 163pp.

***Conflict Management in Congregations***

An anthology of classic works in this important area. A must for all those seeking to help churches work through difficult situations.

**Judith Lampard (ed)**, Churches Together in England. 176pp.

***Such a feast: spiritual nourishment and the churches***

Explores how different Christian traditions develop spiritual life, and includes individual testimonies to the variety of spiritual growth.

**Walter Klassen**, Pandora Press. 118pp. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition

***Anabaptism: neither catholic nor protestant***

This classic work is available again. A good read, reliable and informative.